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MIRABEAU

A Life-History.

IN FOUR BOOKS.

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"Strange lot! Forty years of that smouldering with foul fire-damp and vapour enough; then victory over that;—and, like a burning mountain, he blazes heaven high; and for twenty-three resplendent months pours out, in flame and molten fire-torrents, all that is in him, the Pharos and Wonder-sign of an amazed Europe;—and then lies hollow, cold, for ever!"

CARLYLE'S *French Revolution.*

VOL. II.—TRIUMPH!

T.T.A. 2. 7

LONDON:
SMITH, ELDER AND CO., 65, CORNHILL.

1848.

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BOOK IV.

THE KING OF THE FRENCH.

The time is out of joint—O cursed spite!
That ever I was born to set it right.

HAMLET.

Oh! why has worth so short a date,
While villains ripen grey with time?
Must thou, the noble, glorious, great,
Fall in bold manhood's hardy prime?

BURNS.

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS — THE PROCESSION —OPENING OF THE STATES—MIRABEAU'S NEWSPAPER.

1789.

We have to survey perhaps the most brilliant career ever experienced by man in so short a space: for, in estimating Mirabeau's genius, and examining his voluminous orations with those of Sheridan, Burke, and other contemporaneous speakers, we should never forget that while these extended over a lapse of very many years—the result of much study and reflection—those of the former were crowded in three and twenty months, and several were entirely extemporaneous effusions: which may also serve as some palliation of the many headlong and unadvised measures to

which Mirabeau lent his commanding eloquence in the earlier portion of his parliamentary career.

It may, therefore, not be out of place here, if we make a few observations on a few things, to be borne in mind by all who would form a correct idea of the Revolution, and especially of Mirabeau's course and participation therein: and just in proportion as we deeper study those eventful days, we shall find the character of that much bevaunted liberty-outbreak, to grow blacker; to be no liberty-outbreak, but merely an expending of a nation's corruption, the effervescence of a people's rottenness: we shall find the character of men like Mirabeau, whose dust has been hurled out of the French Pantheon; whose name is little respected now, because he endeavoured in the latter months of his legislative career to establish constitutional liberty in the place of the vilest mob-tyranny: we shall find *his* character brighten, as the events and times become despicably darker. And the study can in no wise be unprofitable; for it will teach us, that under no consideration can a violent force-revolution benefit a country; that it can only have the effect of robbing men who have well-earned their wealth, for the most part to enrich scoundrels who have no claim or title thereunto, save roguery and idleness; that comparative serfdom *with* order and quietness is far preferable to riot and turbulence with the utmost

license; we cannot say liberty; for liberty, as that spirited and world-circulated journal* has so ably said, does not consist in planting *mais* and yelling out in drunken bacchanal-chorus the *Marseillaise*. Two kinds of liberty are alone possible—the rule of good, industrious men, and the subjugation of the idle, ignorant, and bad to them; or the rule of the unprincipled and licentious, and the wholesale ruin of the good and just. The former we have long possessed in England: and see how grandly, amid a shattered and convulsed Europe, our often-erring but right-noble island maintains herself, her laws, her constitution, sublime amid the wrecks of empires; the latter in 1794, and now in 1848, is being established in France: and behold, O wide-mouthed chartist-brawler, how flourishes commerce under it; how calm and tranquil is the nation; how satisfied is every body; and what liberty and brotherhood there is among them! It is not the government that makes the nation, it is the nation that makes the government; and every people has at bottom as good a code of laws as they deserve: some people, it appears, have far better; since they have yet to learn how to appreciate it.

All this may seem discursive and verbiage to the hasty reader, but is not so. The principles apparent in the foregoing remarks; being the principles of

* The *Times*.

real freedom, and no mere show of it; will be of assistance in passing judgment on the coming career of Mirabeau; which was intended to be, and for the greater part *was*, an endeavour after freedom: nay, unless some such principle guide the reader, he can hardly come to a real and solid conclusion.

Let us now give a statement of the grievances the States-General met to consider, and what was the work before them. The English reader, in judging the Revolution of which we write, is apt, by a natural transition, when he considers it in the light of a rising against the constituted government, to regard that government as such an one as our own; and thereby censures it most unjustly. For, as we shall presently show, the state of French law was so unjust, so utterly bad, that a determination to reform most radically, and that promptly, and the mustering together of men determined to effect that reform, was a noble and praiseworthy deed; whereas in England, so beautifully has perfect individual freedom been blended with complete responsibility to outraged justice, that any distracting, and agitating, and disturbing of the country, is blameable, and very often inexcusable. The detail of a few facts too little known to many who pass judgment all too flippantly on such tremendous epochs, will bear out this statement; and, while it does not excuse the insane outrages of numerous acts of the Revolution,

does justify its primary commencement. It was an extinction of feudalism, and was necessary; but it was an extinction badly done: too much done, let us say; and, like all other work ill performed, ill effects are yet remaining therefrom.

In the first place, the nation was not represented at all. The States-General were called at the will of the sovereign; and, by a cunning juggle, as we demonstrated at the close of the first volume, the nation was not in the least represented thereby. The parliament of Paris could certainly refuse to register new imposts; but its members were nearly all nobles: a mere metropolitan municipality. Secondly, there was no trial by jury: that great bulwark of private liberty was entirely wanting. All justice, or rather injustice, was administered by interest (often not the purest) with the ministry; and by a *lettre-de-cachet*, which any man of quality could obtain against you, you were whisked away, unknowing any crime, untried, uncondemned, to languish in some bastile or Vincennes donjon, till God took you, or your enemies grew tender. Thirdly, France having been originally a number of small dukedoms and kingdoms, had various laws peculiar to particular provinces; all more or less feudal in tenor, and therefore not adapted to the modern scheme of society. In Champagne, Nivernois, and other provinces, at the time we are treating of, there actually existed prædial

serfs: men taxed at the arbitrary will of the lord; judged by a like tribunal, and bound to the lands upon which they had the misfortune to be born.* Lastly, the system of supporting the state expenditure was glaringly unjust; for the people—that is to say, those neither noble nor cleric—paid the whole of the taxation, with hardly any material exception; and it was, as we have seen before, the factious and unjustifiable refusal of the privileged to cede this iniquitous distinction for the common weal, that led to the convocation of the States-General at all.

Such was the state of France; and no true-hearted man but will say with us, that to live under such a system, in the dawning almost of the nineteeenth century, was beneath the God-implanted dignity of man. What we rose for and obtained in 1210, surely the French people had a right to rise and fight for in 1790: the mistake was in the choice of weapons: between 1210 and 1790, is a lapse of near 600 years, and in that time the arms, wherewith to fight for constitutional liberty, had changed from swords and violent deeds and speeches, to reason and moderate demand.

The States-General met to do away with these things, and to give a constitution to France: what that constitution was to be, divided all men. Prejudiced and sand-blind aristocrats were determined

* Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. i. 150.

to maintain the old *régime*, if possible: at any rate to do battle for it; others were for a new system, giving a slight accession to the people; others for dividing the supreme power between the king and commons; and in the hearts of few, unrevealed publicly, there lurked the ulterior idea of a republic. Such confused and jarring principles did the States-General call together to regenerate France. What, therefore, were the individual views of that man who had the power of making well-nigh all those views the views of France—what were the principles of Mirabeau?

Instead of being the changeful, inconstant being Mirabeau has been represented in his career in the Assembly, we are prepared to assert that that career was one manly, straightforward following out of principles, conceived long before the Revolution, and never for one moment departed from. It was for this reason we inserted two fragments of his in the latter portion of our first volume, and called particular attention thereunto: it was where he declared himself a very zealous monarchist, and stated that as such would be his proceedings in the States. From this and numerous other like sentences we draw that Mirabeau was, at the opening of the States-General, the advocate of a system of limited monarchy and popular rule, similar to our own admirable method; which, it is highly creditable to him, he most enthu-

siastically admired. His plan of proceeding was blameworthy and unwise; but the end he set before himself was most noble: it was nothing more nor less than to constitutionalize France, by introducing the British mode of government, nearly complete, into that kingdom. The means he took were characteristic of himself — audacious boldness and unlimited self-reliance. He entered the States, determined, first of all, to root out the remnants of absolute power remaining to the king; to extinguish the privileges of the aristocracy; and then begin again, *de novo*, on a new foundation, to raise a limited monarchy, like our own. In calculating his powers for this tremendous and glorious undertaking, he did right to rely on his own capabilities; but he did wrong, seeing that human life is ever uncertain, to bring the nation and the king to such a pass, that its salvation depended upon his single life. In considering a man's career, great evil is done by taking the out-of-the-way and most extraordinary course of proceeding, when it would have been so easy to take the natural and probable one. From this thirst for anomalies, Mirabeau's history in the Assembly has been distorted; until, distortion and perversion having reached their height, men are beginning very fast to see that men are not such monsters of versatility, incomprehensibility, and imbecility, as has been heretofore in many cases the custom to draw them. Let

the reader only keep constantly before him the principles we have shown to be Mirabeau's, the steps he took to establish those principles, and we shall then find his course in the Assembly one most lucid and intelligible career: precisely, O reader, what you and ourselves, entering with the same object, adopting the same means, would have infallibly done. And now to business!

Louis, whose highest praise and highest blame is that he was a man too good for the nation, and too humane and tender for the times, had doated on these States-General ever since their announcement: for in them he imagined that he foresaw the end of all the unpleasantness which had embarrassed and perplexed his reign. Since his accession everything had gone wrong: the crisis which Fenelon, Chesterfield, and all wise men long before had perceived to be at hand, had arrived in his reign; the cloud which Louis XV. had rightly judged would remain unbroken while his abominable life trailed out, was bursting over the innocent head of his most unfortunate successor. But in these States, Louis fondly imagined all responsibility would be taken from his shoulders; and that, his people being happy, he might now live in quiet and serve his God in peace. He had, as it happened, to serve his God by the fearful purification of persecution and anguish. Buoyed up with hope and joyous expectancy, the

monarch had devoted his time and taste to the preparations for the opening of the States-General. With the most elaborate elegance, had the Salle de Menus been prepared for that august assembly; and, that these deliberations might commence with, at the least, a semblance of an appeal to the Everlasting Disposer of events, the whole States attended service at the church of St. Louis, on the evening preceding the day of opening. Oh, had each man there present really purposed, not to join in some loud-howled credo or latin anthem-song, but, by acting in consonance with God's edicts, so to make his life one *acted* hymn, the history of France had been far different. From an assemblage of men who meet together to regenerate a nation, not having the fear of God before their eyes, the love of him within their hearts, no good can possibly arrive; and reigns of terror and such like are the natural result.

On the evening of the 4th of May, the procession from the church of St. Louis, after having heard there the usual services, to that of Notre Dame, did, however, take place. Madame de Staël, the Marquis of Ferrières, and other eminent personages were spectators; and from their brilliant details, the spectacle can live for ages. From palace and from cellar, every man and woman that could attend, from Paris, and even from the distant provincial cities,

thronged the streets of Versailles, to mark a spectacle such as their ancestors through the far back ages had never seen. The spacious streets were lined with guards, and behind these, straining every nerve to catch a glimpse of the cortège, stood the multitudinous throngs; while from the open windows leaned out the tradesmen's families, and upon the elegant verandahs and overhanging galleries, sat the titled and élite of France. Every sensation—from sorrow to rapture, from brooding doubt to ecstatic hope—agitated the bosoms of those tens of thousands. There were hearts which hailed these States as the commencement of one of those sweet theoretic fraternity-times, so delightful in print; so unactable in fact. Others foreboded much; reckless innovation, abolishment of places, an ultimate republic, and a reduction in the funds: for selfishness and patriotism are blended ever in such crowds as that. Some few trusted that a constitution, free and just, with a presiding power, permitted to punish vice *aa libitum;* to persecute virtue prohibited, would be established. But it is to be feared that by far the majority delighted in that procession, because they thought the majority thereof would adopt some popular fixed idea; and that, for the future, a man might do nothing upon the earth, save plunder his richer neighbour; and there be no law to check him in that creditable employment.

In one thing, however, all were unanimous; and that was in regarding with regret the revival of those distinctions of costume, in the eighteenth century, for the most part exploded in the sixteenth. First of all, amid music, waving of banners, and deafening applause, marched the Third Estate, clad in their particular costume. Six hundred men, habited in plain black clothes, common muslin cravats, small cloaklets, and unadorned slouched hats. Among these, there was but one man who commanded the attention of the spectators as an individual; and that was Mirabeau. Not alone for his reputation, now swollen to an immense height; not alone for the many romantic stories circulated as to his immorality and vice; but as *a man* he concentrated all attention upon him: we are told, "he attracted the curiosity even of those who were unacquainted with his reputation:"* and truly his was a form to arrest attention. Considerably above the common height of Frenchmen,† that height was rendered doubly striking by the colossal formation of his every limb; and his chest and shoulders were widely expanded, and even unnaturally broad. His head was immense; and from it, there hung in wild profusion a forest of black hair: his lion's mane, as he was wont to term it; his eye, large and rolling, beamed with the fire of genius and passion; and

* Alison, ii. 3 (7th edit.) † He was five feet, eleven in. (English).

his mouth curled itself, as though proclaiming tacitly the patrician pride and haughty self-confidence of the man.* During the greater portion of the march, applause poured in upon him: but in one part, a few, whose vice-seeking eyes saw the immoralities and not the talents, manifested their dislike by the usual cries. The applauses could not move Mirabeau, but these did: we read that, turning his large black eyes full upon, he glared them into silence, and so passed proudly on, the greatest man in France.†

On the morrow, the 5th, the States-General were duly opened by the king in person, in the Salle de Menus, superbly decorated for the occasion. Accounts differ concerning Mirabeau's reception on entering the hall; and we cite them, to demonstrate how jarring and contradictory are the materials whence a history has to be drawn. Our two great narratives of the events diametrically differ. Mr. Alison says, "Similar approbation was beginning for those of Provence, but it was checked to mark the personal application of the applause to Mirabeau:"‡ while on the other hand Carlyle writes, "The Constituent Assembly when his name was first read out, received it with murmurs."§ Thiers, in

* Œuvres de Madame de Staël, vol. xii. 193; Michelet's Revolution, 86 (Bohn's edition); Carlyle's do. vol. i. 166.

† Fils Adop. vi. 35.

‡ Alison, vol. ii. 5.

§ Carlyle's Miscellanies, vol. iv. 73 (third edition).

his usual superficial, semi-lucid way, says, "A general movement took place on the appearance of Count Mirabeau; and indeed his look and manner made an impression on the Assembly:" * which may be applied either one way or the other. The best authority we can quote is Madame de Staël, who was an eye-witness of the opening ceremony; and to her statement we would attach belief. "When Mirabeau appeared," she says, "a murmur was heard in the Assembly: he comprehended its meaning, but traversed the hall haughtily to his place."† Michelet gives the best comment on this, in that strange, and half-insane work of his: "Murmurs," cries he, "against the immoral man? That brilliant society, dying of its vices, and present at its last festival, had no right to be severe."‡

The proceedings of the first day were of course mostly formal: the good king delivered an address, in which his inherent benevolence and goodness shines forth, unbedimmed by any *œil-de-bœuf* influence; and the natural free-heartedness of the monarch's address stands in most favourable contrast with the stupid pedantry pronounced by Necker, immediately afterwards. The manner of voting, and other topics of boundless interest were

* Thiers's History of the Revolution, p. 10. (Whittaker's trans.)

† Œuvres de Madame de Staël, xii. 195.

‡ Michelet's History, 88.

not settled or even mentioned, while paltry taxes of no interest whatsoever, and barren numerical details, were given to a wearisome extent. He endeavoured, irrespective of the exigencies of the times—of the justice or advisability of measures, to keep peace with and please all men; and, as a natural consequence, he disappointed and displeased every one. Without discussion of any kind, the Assembly dispersed on the conclusion of this harangue at five o'clock.

In the mean time, Mirabeau had not been idle: his eloquence was as yet an undeveloped power, while his pen was a tried and certain one; accordingly, immediately after his arrival at Versailles, he had entered into arrangements with M. le Jaye, a Parisian printer, for a daily paper, to be entitled, the "*Journal of the States-General;*" and, by that miraculous faculty wherewith he compelled imperceptibly, like the goblin bridegroom in Lenore, all he willed to fall in and follow him, he had collected instanter a staff of efficient collaborateurs—such as Dumont, Duroverai, and others—men who carried bricks, while he built. On the evening of the 4th, appeared No. 1 of this brochure, containing an account of the procession, with criticisms on the folly of reviving the costumes—on the Bishop of Nancy's oration at the church, like "modern tragedies, half verse," and on other incidental subjects. On the 6th, appeared

the second, with a like account of the opening of the States, and lengthy remarks upon the various speeches; especially Necker's, to which he gives all the praise due: which on calculation will be found to be none at all. The prime minister received a well-merited and masterly castigation. To this Necker replied in a manner little honourable to him—he took a mean revenge. Forgetting that for six months, by general understanding, the censorship of the press had been laid aside, and that its abolition was one of the topics on which the minds of the States were already settled, on the 7th of May a decree of Council suppressed this journal. But Mirabeau was not to be daunted: he continued his plan, by changing the title to "*Letters of the Count of Mirabeau to his Constituents*," which shortly afterwards lapsed into the "*Courier de Provence*," and from Mirabeau's editorship. The municipality of Paris met, and protested against the suppression; and, indeed, the measure incurred universal odium. In his first "Letter to his Constituents," Mirabeau thus expressed himself concerning it. "Twenty-five millions of voices demand liberty of the press; the nation and the king demand unanimously the concentrative suggestions of all genius. Well! It is at such a time they give us a ministerial veto! It is at such a time that, after having been lured by an illusive and perfidious tolerance, a minister,

popular so called, has the effrontery to put the seal to our thoughts—to encourage the system of lying—and to treat, as a contraband object, the indispensable exportation of truth."*

* 1re Lettre du Compte de Mirabeau à ces Commettans.

CHAPTER II.

BATTLE WITH THE PRIVILEGED ORDERS—APPEAL TO THE CLERGY—ADVANCES TO THE COURT—FIRST AND SECOND ORATION ON THE VERIFICATION AND NAME OF THE ASSEMBLY—THE SITTING OF THE 23RD OF JUNE.

May 6th to June 23rd, 1789.

In the whole annals of ministerial history, there exists no such instance of pusillanimous and suicidal timidity, as that of Necker leaving the decision of separate or united verification to be fought out among the interested parties themselves. Either he should have confronted the unanimous demands of France, and refrained from calling the States-General at all, or he should have convoked them in such a manner as to ensure the amicable and constitutional discussion of the state of the kingdom. But, by not doing so—by pitting the three orders to battle for the victory—he deluged France with

anarchy and ruin, and called forth angry passions and wicked class-prejudices, which neither he nor any other man could allay. Necker has ever to us appeared too lightly censured for his ridiculous behaviour in this instance: his insanely stupid conduct, in fact, for it was the two months of jangling and disputing, when France had to behold the melancholy spectacle of those men who had been assembled to remedy their country's miseries, squabbling in confused bedlam-chatter about mere forms; which, however intrinsically vital, were nominally and to appearance but forms after all: it was this example of anarchy in the high places, which first aroused that lax anarchic spirit in France, which has lasted to the present day; and which, while it continues, must ever disorganize France and retard her political and social culture. That Necker was privately an amiable, well-meaning man, there can be no doubt: but that, in his capacity of premier, he was a paltry, pedantic egotist, totally unfitted for the times he had fallen upon, must become manifest more and more in proportion as the history of those times is studied.

On the 1st of May the States re-assembled for business; but, owing to the blundering policy of the ministry, a quarrel ensued upon the instant. This was not as to the manner of voting, but as to the less important subject of verification. As that, however,

was the prelude to the voting question, it was very apparent that if separate verification were agreed to, separate voting would also follow. The Commons met in the great hall, used for the opening ceremony; and, as that chamber had even so soon obtained the name of the Hall of the Assembly, gained a decided advantage thereby. The nobles and clergy occupied separate apartments in the same building. By an immense majority, the first of these latter resolved upon the separate verification, and by a slender superiority the latter arrived at a like conclusion. The Commons, adopting a wily and wise line of policy, remained inactive; stating that they waited for the other powers before proceeding to business. Thus, with all France gazing at them with more or less annoyance, they sat mere nullities; the Commons unverified, the others verified, but to no purpose. On the 12th, Rabaut de St. Etienne (the historian) suggested the establishment of a conference between the three, upon the contested point. This was carried: conferences did ensue, but they came to nothing; the only end gained thereby being to exasperate all parties, and render conciliation doubly difficult.

With the knowledge of Mirabeau's love of action, and hatred of wrangling about trifles, which the reader must have long ere this acquired, he can imagine his extreme disgust at these disputes. With impatience fast amounting to boiling rage, he had sat from the

6th to the 26th, listening to these tedious debates, but taking no share therein; venting his sentiments through his "Letters to his Constituents," and in private correspondence with Mauvillion and others: but on the 18th, being resolved that some definite conclusion should be arrived at, he delivered his first speech in the Assembly; being an exposition of the state of the quarrel, blaming the privileged order severely, and ending by a proposition to invite the clergy to join them, and so, having gained a majority of orders, to throw over the other remaining one. It is a common error to suppose that Mirabeau assumed the lead in the Assembly on its first opening; the real fact being, that, until his celebrated reply to de Brézé, he spoke little, and possessed exceedingly small influence among that body. This is shown by this suggestion having fallen to the ground. The commissioners of the three orders still continued to meet and play at conference; until, on the 27th, the Nobles sent in their final and definite answer, that they should verify themselves separately this session, but that the States might decide how it was to be done in any future convocation. On receipt of this reply, Mirabeau mounted the tribune again, and reproduced his motion of the 18th in a fine harangue.

"The verification by commissioners," he began, "is at variance with principles; it is, and it ever will be, impossible to substitute this verification for

the sanction of the United States-General: above all, so long as the General Assembly shall be composed of what we term *three orders*, it is impossible that the contentions which interest the respective orders can be discussed in presence of each other. It is equally impossible that an order in particular can become the judge of questions which interest the other two others; each order is only a part, the States-General united are the only judges."

Having thus shown that the commissioners could never come to a conclusion, he proceeds to demand that a deputation from the Third Estate should be sent to the clergy, to summon them, "in the name of God, and for the welfare of the nation," to join them; that so the legislation of the country might proceed. This was carried by acclamation, and Target was despatched to the clergy with a large deputation. The clergy demanded till the following day to deliberate upon their reply, and in the evening the prelates and higher members of that body sought the advice of the court: the result of this was, that the king on the 28th sent a message to the three orders, requesting that new commissioners might be elected, and another general conference established in presence of the keeper of the seals. A long discussion upon this proposal took place in the Third Estate; in which Mirabeau took the lead.

"In every sense," said he, "this is a snare: it is a snare if we defer to the desire of the king, a snare if we refuse to do so. If we accept the conferences, all this will be finished by a decree of the council: we shall be separated and despotized over by that fact; because all the aristocrats incline to the vote by order, because they would so maintain their place; while in the method of voting by head they would not always be the first, and often they would be the last. If, on the contrary, we do not accept, they will say that the Commons, tumultuous, undisciplined, greedy for independence, without system, without principles, will destroy the royal authority."

He then proposed to them an address, informing the king, that,

"The national wish is for the unity of the Assembly; that individual powers can only be verified by the entire Assembly; that the Commons expressly charge their commissioners to occupy themselves with considering every expedient, which, without shaking their fundamental principle, shall be esteemed likely to establish concord between the different orders, and to make them concur in seeking in common the means of realizing the hopes his majesty has conceived for the welfare and the prosperity of the state!"

This advice was accepted; new commissioners were elected, and the conferences resumed: but

Mirabeau placed not the slightest confidence in these conferences, and had only proposed them, because to comply with the king's request was the only method for an assembly professing loyal sentiments. He saw that by this delay the monarchy itself was being imperceptibly undermined: for even so early the people had commenced forming two parties, the People and the Third Estate against the King and the Privileged; whereas, had they judged correctly, the parties would have been the king and the people against the queen and the court. The queen was a good and able woman, but over-rated: in her breast there dwelt no love for the people; nothing save love of her royalty, her dignity: the king, though weak-minded, had a lion's courage, and, what was far finer, a true loving heart towards his people and to God. Sorry to see one he so reverenced, so deserving of all reverence, perilled by the timidity of his ministry and the factious intrigues of his court, and disgusted at the inaction of the states, Mirabeau, at this period, decided upon offering his services to the ministry. He did this through M. Malouet, a deputy of constitutional principles, and friend of Necker; and a more manly declaration of sentiments than his explanation of his views to that gentleman, it would be difficult to conceive. It was as follows:—

"I have desired an explanation with you, be-

cause, despite your moderation, I recognise in you a friend of liberty; and because I am perhaps more fearful than you of the fermentation I perceive in men's minds, and of the evils that may result therefrom. I am not a man to sell myself basely to despotism; *I wish for a constitution, free, but monarchic.* I do not wish to overthrow the monarchy: but, if they do not take measures in time, I perceive in that Assembly of such vicious minds—of so much inexperience and self-exaltation—a resistance, a bitterness very little considered in the higher orders, that I dread, as much as you, most horrible commotions; I, therefore, address myself to your probity. You are connected with M. Necker and M. de Montmorin; you ought to know what they desire; *and if they have a plan, and if that plan be reasonable, I will defend it!*"*

Malouet, delighted at finding a man whom, in common with many others, he had taken for an ultra-democrat, to be a royalist and friend of order, brought about an interview between Mirabeau and Necker. It, however, served but to make Mirabeau's contempt for Necker's official capacity still stronger. Necker remembering, what he should have forgotten, Mirabeau's illiberal and vehement attacks upon him in his monetary writings,—puffed up with an idea of his own capability for grappling

* Fils Adop. vi. 60.

with the dangers unaided; and having a super-sublime virgin-prudery in his constitution which could by no means overlook the immorality of the man; received Mirabeau with haughty frigidity, with disdainful formality: answering nothing, disclosing nothing. This treatment was ill suited to the proud spirit and the hot blood of Mirabeau. He left Necker in wrath: and meeting Malouet shortly afterwards, exclaimed to him, "I will go to him no more: but he shall hear of me!"

While this had occurred, the conferences were being continued, and on the 9th June, the clergy laid another snare for the Third Estate. The harvest of 1788 had failed almost entirely, and consequently, as the harvest of 1789 approached, the famine therefrom arising grew all the more intense. The clergy, therefore, proposed to the Commons to form a general committee for remedial measures. This proposition might have sprung from purely charitable motives, or it might not: but it is certain that the position of the Commons was most delicate. Did they reject the clergy's request, it gave room for a charge of inhumanity being brought against them: did they, on the other hand, accept it, by thus commencing to transact business, they virtually acknowledged the separate verification, and the competency of the States to proceed to business. But the genius of Mirabeau, aided by one or two others,

again extricated them from their danger. The answer returned was, that, as anxious as the clergy for the amelioration of the starving many, they had for now some four weeks been waiting for them in the Salle de Menus, before commencing active measures for the relief of the people.

On the 11th, occurred one of those great triumphs of extemporaneous eloquence so peculiarly confined to Mirabeau. Duroverai, banished from Geneva by the aristocrats, as we mentioned, had made Mirabeau his ladder of fortune in Paris, and all too frequently compromised his patron by his republican and factious sentiments. On the day stated above, this gentleman had accompanied Mirabeau to the Assembly, and having occasion to pass a note to Mirabeau, a deputy* arose and announced to the Assembly that a foreign spy, in the pay of the English Government, was among them taking notes. An immense uproar followed this: confused cries of "Name the deputy!" "Point him out," &c., arose tumultuously; but Mirabeau uplifting his giant-frame and resounding voice roared them into silence; and they ended applauding, in such hearty concert as the Salle de Menus had never before heard.

* As a proof that little or no reliance is to be placed on the confused *Souvenirs* of Dumont, he states that this deputy was the Abbé Maury, *whom he saw and heard;* whereas, the clergy did not join the Commons till a later day, and the very first speech delivered by Maury was on the subject of the Veto, in August!

In the mean time, on the 7th, the result of the conference under ministerial surveillance was made known: it was that, as before, no agreement had been made, but that a proposition from the king was submitted for their consideration. This was that they should separately verify, and whenever a discussed subject was differently decided upon, the king should give a casting vote. Had the king been left in such decision to his own heart's impulses, this proposition would have been most acceptable: but too often the monarch was swayed by a knot of blinded aristocrats; who, with the queen at their head, contrived to ruin themselves and their unfortunate master. Mirabeau attacked this in his ninth "Letter to his Constituents," and the Third Estate was spared the pain of appearing disloyal, by the nobles, with protest and suicidal rashness, rejecting it. The dispute was now evidently coming to a crisis. On the 10th, Mirabeau abruptly introduced Sièyes to the Assembly, by saying, "All our attempts at conciliation having been refused by one party, cannot be discussed by another: a month has elapsed, and no decided part has been assumed: a deputy of Paris has an important motion to submit; let us give him our attention." Sièyes then proposed that the two orders, for the last time, should be invited to join them. This was agreed to, and in reply on the 12th, the two orders declined: at seven in the even-

ing, the Third Estate proceeded to verify themselves by calling over the list of the entire States. None of the clergy or nobility came to answer, and the Commons elected Bailly to be their first president. During the next day or two, about eight *curés* joined them; and on the 15th, Sièyes again appeared in the tribune, and proposed that the Third Estate should take the title of "The Assembly of the known and verified Representatives of the French Nation." It was then that Mirabeau pronounced one of those lengthy and resplendent orations, which literally took France by storm; and in which, in this instance especially, moderation and good sense are as apparent as eloquence and commanding power of words. The opening is singularly dignified.

"We are about to depart from the circle wherein your wisdom has so long circumscribed itself. If you have persevered, with a rare firmness, in a system of political inaction, incessantly decried by those who had a great interest in making you adopt false measures, it was to give leisure for your intellects to calm themselves—for the friends of the public weal to second the wishes of justice and of reason; it was to assure yourselves the better, that even in the pursuit of good you would not exceed all bounds; it was, in a word, to manifest that moderation which is ever the companion of courage; or rather, without which there is no courage truly durable and invincible

"However, time has glided on; the pretensions, the usurpations of the two orders have increased; your wise delay has been taken for weakness; they have conceived the hope that meanness, inquietude, public misfortunes, incessantly aggravated by circumstances almost inconceivable, would compel you to some pusillanimous or inconsiderate step. Behold, then, the moment to assure your friends, and inspire your foes with fear—I had well-nigh said terror—by demonstrating, in your earliest operations, the forethought of ability, joined to the quiet firmness of reason!"

He then proceeds to show that the king's will and the nation's was, that France should have a constitution; that the paltry disputes had hitherto retarded them; that

"All gentle measures are now exhausted; all conference is finished: nought remains save steps which are decisive, and perhaps extreme—extreme? *No, gentlemen, justice and truth are ever found in a wise medium; extremities are never adopted but in the last struggling of despair!*"

Having thus endeavoured to keep their judgments cool and moderate, he demonstrates that the proposed title is too arrogant; insomuch as the two other orders were just as much the representatives of the nation as they were; that all united were alone entitled to that name. But Mirabeau's talent

lying not alone in demolishing a bad name, he then went on to produce a better—this was that of "The Representatives of the *People* of France," supporting that form in the most masterly manner, and he concluded by submitting a string of eight resolutions to be forwarded to the king, expressing their loyalty, and their reasons for assuming that title. This speech was too temperate; too wise for the times, and was not well received. M. Mounier and Rabaut St. Etienne had proposed other titles, embodying a similar meaning to Mirabeau's, but too lengthy—the one consisting of six lines, and the other of three. Malouet supported Mirabeau; but M. le Grand proposed the arrogant and unjust title of NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. In the evening sitting of the same day, this subject was rediscussed; and on the 16th, Mirabeau delivered a second oration, prepared hurriedly in the interval. He had been attacked for having stated that the king's sanction to the title they assumed was indispensable; and this is his reply, delivered amid howls of disapprobation.

"His answer (that of the member attacking him) to what I have urged concerning the necessity of the royal sanction, is, that when the people have spoken, he conceives the sanction quite unnecessary. For my own self, gentlemen, I consider the sanction of the king to be so indispensable, that I would much rather reside at Constantinople than in France, if it

did not exist: yes, I declare, I know of nothing more terrible than an aristocracy of six hundred self-constituted men; who to-morrow would declare themselves permanent, then hereditary, and finish like aristocracies in general, by engulphing all things."

But Mirabeau's eloquence was all in vain, and the title of NATIONAL ASSEMBLY was adopted by a majority of 401 votes: the numbers being 491 to 90.* This was the great false step of the Revolution: to have remained inactive until the force of circumstances compelled the two orders to have joined them, or even to have discussed separately, had been better. It was, to say the least, a flagrant usurpation; and it is to Mirabeau's eternal honour that his eloquence was directed against it. It was virtually decreeing that labour was everything, and property nothing; that a congregation of (with a few honourable exceptions) ci-devant lawyers, briefless barristers, and penniless democrats, were France: if they were, then was a reign of terror, and that damnable down-

* The lower demagogues had lately established a plan of publishing the list of voters against the popular measures, and denouncing them to the people. Sensible that he might use his popularity for great good to the monarchy and to France, and knowing that his vote could not turn the scale, Mirabeau had, to preserve that popularity, retired before the division; and so, not seeing his name among the ninety, the multitude concluded it was among the 491. This act Michelet imputes as cowardice to Mirabeau; but to us it appears as the truest kind of courage.

rushing to Hades, precisely what France merited; and the Mirabeaus, and Louis', and such like, should, have left the Hell-Gomorrah; it was unworthy of them: if it was *not*, then this decree was unjustifiable. "*They imagine*," said Mirabeau, in laudable contempt, "*that all is now ended! But I should not be surprised if civil war were the result of their beautiful decree!*"

The majority of the clergy joined the Commons directly afterwards; and the remainder of the two orders surrounded the king with supplications to take decisive measures to put down the third. But measures in that direction were too late: he should have commanded them to join the National Assembly; for, even calculating the doubled number of the Commons, there were sufficient moderate men among them to have ensured respectable laws, with the conjunction of the others; while to leave the Assembly to itself, was to permit France to be governed by its worst citizens, while its best were self-excluded. In this juncture, they decided on the worst plan possible, — that of *forcing* the Assembly to unconstitute itself, and reverify as a separate power. This advice was mere madness. It was suggested by Bertrand de Moleville, and by Mirabeau's most unworthy and ungrateful friend Duroverai, who very officiously advocated such a plan to Necker. They had mistaken the crisis: and the greatest point of

their mistake was in supposing the States-General the end: when they were but the commencement, of an entire re-establishment, and reorganization of the constitution. The king was lured away from his more sensible advisers to Marly, there pestered by his brothers and his queen until he consented to take the steps they wished: namely, to *compel* the Third Estate to separate verification. Necker sent in his formal protest against such a step; but the king resolved to take it: he was led like an innocent to the scaffold by his own friends: his blood did not so much lie on the heads of his actual murderers as upon the head of his queen and her most insensate coterie. On the 20th, Bailli received notice that, in consequence of the king intending to hold a personal sitting on the 23d, the hall would be closed till that time; he, however, went thither at the head of several deputies, and finding the doors closed against him, the Assembly performed that tumultuous adjournment to the Tennis Court, so universally known. On the 23d, occurred the well-known king's sitting. King Louis entered the hall amid all the pomp of royal splendour, and, after a long speech, expressive of his wish that the people should be happy: the language of *his* heart; proceeded to deliver the language of his *courtiers'* heads: a most sorry blending of good and evil. He concluded by saying, "I *command* you, gentlemen, to disperse immediately,

and to repair to-morrow morning to your *respective chambers*, there to resume your sitting!" and so saying, he left the hall. The nobility and clergy followed him instantly: the Commons remained hesitating, dubious, and irresolute. It was the crisis of the Revolution: one word, either way, would have swayed that assembly; one word either way and the Revolution goes on, or stops its course for the time being, to be more fearfully enacted later on: for so rotten was France that it must have come sooner or later. Had Mirabeau not been there? Consider that. But he *was* there, and his soul perceived, as a great man's alone could do, what each deputy would have said had he only dared to do so. Starting, like a sleep-refreshed giant, to his feet, he elevated his commanding form above the mass of deputies, expanded his broad Hercules-bosom, and flung his head back upon his shoulders, as was his wont.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I confess that what you have heard, might be beneficial to the country, were it not that the presents of despotism are always dangerous. Have we this array of arms, this violation of the national sanctuary, to command you to be happy? Who prescribes these things? Your mandatory! he who should receive your wishes, and not command you. The freedom of discussion is destroyed: an armed force surrounds the Assembly.

Where are the foes of the nation? Is Cataline at our gates? I call upon you, gentlemen, to assert your dignity and legislative power, and to remember your oath;* which will not permit you to disperse till you have established the constitution!"

As Mirabeau sat down, the Marquis de Brézé, grand-master of the ceremonies, entered. "You have heard," he said to Bailli, "the orders of the king."

"Yes, sir," cried Mirabeau, starting up once more, flashing fire upon the usher. "Yes, sir, we have heard the intentions that have been suggested to the king: and you, sir, who cannot be his organ with the National Assembly—you, who have here neither place, nor voice, nor right of speech—you are not the person to remind us thereof. Go and tell those who sent you,† that we are here by the will of the people, and that we will only be driven hence by the power of the bayonet."

De Brézé disappeared, we read, backwards, bowing as before the king!

The Assembly then decreed, upon Mirabeau's motion, that the person of each deputy was inviolable; that any person or persons whatsoever, endeavouring to try, condemn, or punish any deputy

* That of the Tennis Court.

† Not "go and tell your master," as has been generally given.

for any speech delivered in the Assembly, were traitors to the nation, and guilty of a capital crime!

He who would pass judgment upon this action of Mirabeau, must remember two things:—1st, It was not a deliberated act; but a wild spontaneous outburst. 2ndly, That the action of Louis was most unwise: he must, moreover, reflect what his feelings would be—what the feelings of the nation would be, did a British monarch, setting his ministers and the Commons at defiance, march down into the parliament-house, and there disperse the representatives of the British people. He must get his mind in *that* train of supposition, ere he is qualified to judge of that momentous 23rd of June.

One thing, we can say: on that day was absolute monarchy overturned in France. Absolute monarchy, in the person of King Louis, stood up and said unto the nation, Thou shalt! and constitutional freedom, in the person of Mirabeau, confronted it and cried, We will not! And they did not. Therefore was King Louis deposed from the sovereignty his name had hitherto had over the people; and henceforth, from that day, over the hearts and over the intellects of the nation, was Mirabeau a king!

CHAPTER III.

SPEECH ON THE DISMISSION OF THE TROOPS—DEATH OF MIRABEAU'S FATHER, AND TAKING OF THE BASTILE — SPLENDID OUTBURST OF ELOQUENCE.

From June 23rd to July 16th, 1789.

It is certain that had Mirabeau had leisure to reflect upon the king's measures, he would have never delivered his celebrated reply, but one entirely different. For several days he expressed his annoyance at not having been informed of the intentions of the court: even going so far as to say, "*It is thus kings are led to the scaffold!*" It brought about a coolness between him and Duroverai: which is not to be regretted; for nothing can be more thoroughly contemptible than the characters of those Genevese refugees. Banished their native country for republican principles, they accepted a pension from the English government gave secret council to the

court, while they advised the revolutionary party; lived upon, and by, Mirabeau solely, and compromised his fortunes by their ultra-democratic acts and speeches: and when he was no more, maligned and traduced their friend and benefactor.

Seeing now clearly that there was no hope from Louis, owing to the pestilential atmosphere he breathed; seeing that any attempt to innoculate constitutional freedom on the existing régime could not be any other than unsuccessful; he entered with all his vigour into his design of entirely overthrowing the old system, and laying absolute monarchy and privileged aristocracy in the dust, and then re-raising the former: forgetting altogether that when a king has been reduced to entire subjection to his subjects, the spell of kingship is destroyed for ever in his person. To the end of this year, we must regard Mirabeau as a man bent upon destruction; and in so doing, taking at times many steps repugnant to his sentiments and wishes: and for that reason the immediately coming portion is the only questionable part of his legislative career.

On the 25th of June, the minority of the nobles under the Duke of Orleans joined the Assembly; and on the 27th, the complete junction was effected by the accession of the remaining nobles and clergy, who came by command of the king: who thus did at the close of June, what he ought to have done at

the close of April. This junction brought into opposition with Mirabeau, his younger brother; whom we last saw at the Castle of If: since then, he had been fighting in America, with Lafayette; and now, having been returned as a deputy of the noblesse, took his place on the *coté droit*. He was nearly forty, and so fat that men called him Barrel-Mirabeau. He was, perhaps, the fiercest aristocrat in France: and the hardest drinker. On this occasion, Mirabeau, although labouring under a severe attack of illness, delivered an admirable address; which, when we remark that, according to some histories, he was even then plotting the overthrow of the king, must seem strange. He must exactly have nullified, overtly, in the Assembly, what he secretly concocted in the Palais Royal! He argued that the king was well intentioned, and that the foolish power-parade on the 23rd was purely the result of evil councillors, and antagonistic to the benevolent heart of Louis: but that the people, being naturally exasperated by that ill-advised procedure, were in a state of much exasperation on that account, which it was the duty of the Assembly to assuage.

"Let us, then," said he, "enlighten the people; we whom they should believe, because they have chosen us: let us enlighten them, for it is a sacred duty for deputies, that they invite their constituents to repose entirely upon them the care of upholding

their interests—the care of battling for their rights. It would be, therefore, prudent to issue an address to our constituents, to inspire them with a calm confidence, by demonstrating to them the position of the National Assembly; to urge them, by the name of their dearest interests, to contribute all their wisdom and all their efforts to the maintenance of order, of the public tranquillity, and the authority of the laws and their ministers: so as to justify ourselves in their eyes, whatsoever be the events, by showing them that we appreciate all the value of moderation and of peace!"

To the following beautiful conclusion, we would draw especial attention; as it is important, as a refutation of the treasonous design imputed to him. It is in the form of an address to the electors.

"Our combats are simple discussions: our enemies are only pardonable prejudices; our victories shall not be cruel; our triumphs shall be blest even by those last conquered. Ah! evil to him who would not shrink from corrupting a pure revolution, and from delivering to the sorry chances of the most uncertain events the destinies of France; which are not doubtful, if we wait for all things from the hands of justice and reason!

"When one reflects on all that should result for the welfare of twenty-five millions of men, from a legal constitution, substituted for ministerial

caprices; from a concentration of all wishes, of all wisdom for the perfecting of our laws; from the reform of abuses, the reduction of imposts, the economy in finances; from moderation in punishments, regulations in the tribunals; from the abolition of a crowd of servitudes which fetter industry and mutilate the human faculties; in a word, from that great system of liberty which, commencing, as a basis, with municipalities created by free elections, and gradually ascending through provincial administrations, receives its perfection by the annual return of States-General: when one reflects on all that which should result from the restoration of this vast empire, one feels that the fellest blow to humanity, would be to oppose the high destiny of our nation—to retain it oppressed beneath the weight of all its chains. But that could only result from evils of all kinds which accompany distractions, licence, and the abominations of civil wars. Our fate is in our own wisdom: violence alone could render doubtful, or even destroy, that liberty which reason assures unto us.

"Such are our sentiments: we owe it to ourselves to explain them to you, that you may honour us with your conformity. It was important to prove to you that, in pursuing the great patriotic object, we shall only use proper measures for attaining thereunto.

"Such have we shown ourselves since the moment when you confided to us the noblest interests; such shall we ever be: firm in the resolution of labouring, in concert with our king, not upon temporary reforms, but even upon the constitution of the kingdom; determined to see our fellow-citizens, in all orders, enjoy the innumerable advantages nature and liberty promise unto us; to assist the poor suffering country people; to ameliorate the misery which chokes virtue and industry; conceiving nothing equal to those laws which, equal for all, shall be the common safeguard of all; not less inaccessible to the projects of personal ambition than to the weakness of fear; upholding concord, but not wishing to purchase it by the rights of the people: desiring, in fact, for the complete recompense of our labours, to see all the children of this immense country united in the same sentiments, rejoicing in the general happiness, and cherishing the common Father, whose reign shall have been the epoch of the regeneration of France!"

Such is the substance of the form of address, as reintroduced on the 1st of July, after the mob had forced open the Abbaye prison. On the 2d, several of the clergy presented a protest against the legality of the Assembly. Mirabeau declared that the legality of the Assembly could not be questioned in the Assembly by members thereof: as if it were

illegal to them, they had no right to speak in it. A majority of 672 over 28, on the 8th, decided that the question could not be discussed.

The plots of the court cabal went on even more indiscreetly. One could weep to think how the good Louis was sacrificed to his sublime conjugal and parental love! Alone, with his own feelings to prompt him, all was for concession, for peace, and for general forgiveness; but when the beautiful Vindictive entwined her soft, snowy arms around him, and looked love into his soul, he could not but melt, although that melting was his ruin. Such power has beauty over the spirit of man, for good or for evil. Had the king followed up his commands to the two orders with energy; the day following the general union, had he gone down into the hall, and there re-declared the concessions of the 23d of June, forgotten, owing to the commandful conclusion; with nine-tenths of the Assembly, at that period royalist; one sees not but all might have been well. But the queen—with all Maria Theresa's fire, and none of her discretion—and her rash coterie, would not have it so: they would reconquer completely, and have vengeance as well. Therefore, from all quarters poured troops into Versailles, under the pretence of protection, until the Assembly literally debated amid a forest of soldiers; for the most part German and Swiss mercenaries. The

queen and her advisers even engaged themselves in manufacturing paper money, on the sole security of the king's name.* Reports were also rife that the Assembly was to be forcibly dispersed, and several of their leaders—Mirabeau among the number —seized for an example. At this juncture, on the 8th of July, Mirabeau appeared, with his celebrated speech, to propose that an address be presented to induce his majesty to dismiss the troops. This is replete with the same encomiums on the king, which no one can doubt came from Mirabeau's heart: he acquits him of every unpatriotic design, and blames most bitterly his pervertors. He demonstrates how unjustifiable and useless that armed force was, and then puts this pointed and prophetic question—

"In fine, have the advisers of these measures foreseen the consequences resulting from them, as regards the security of the throne? Have they studied in the history of all nations how revolutions are commenced? How they conduct themselves? Have they observed by what fatal gradation of circumstances the wisest minds are driven beyond all the limits of moderation, and by how terrible an impulse an excited people precipitates itself into excesses, the first idea whereof would have made them shudder?" He concluded by moving for an address; and achieved a splendid triumph, by having

* Bailli's Mémoires, i. 331.

only four opposing votes, and being called upon, by acclamation, to draw up the address. This he submitted to the Assembly on the 9th; and it is too celebrated, and too often copied, to need insertion in our limited space. Let us remark, however, that the claims laid to it by Dumont* are apocryphal, if not positively unbelievable: a sample of the accuracy of Dumont's memory was given a few pages back; and as the document is immeasurably above Dumont's capacity,—and as Alexandre de Lameth, who was present at its compilation, distinctly states, that though Dumont may have attempered a strong passage or two, the fire and the eloquence were Mirabeau's alone—† we must, for ourselves at least, refuse any credence to the Genevese. A deputation of twenty-four, Mirabeau among the number, was ordered to carry it to the monarch on the spot: which was done. On the 11th, the king: or rather say the queen's cabal *through* the king; replied in a decidedly Jesuitic speech, giving no satisfactory reply about the troops; but offering to accompany the Assembly to Noyon or Soissons, if the necessity of having troops near Paris gave offence. The same day Necker was dismissed privately. Mirabeau attacked the king's reply: stating that it was, in fact, a refusal of compliance, and that, though they

* Dumont, p. 107.

† Lameth's Histoire de l'Assemblée Constituante, p. 49.

had every confidence in the king's word, they had none whatever in those unseen secret intriguers, in whose hands he was an amiable puppet.

On this day, July 11th, died the venerable but eccentric Friend of Man. When Mirabeau had triumphed in Provence at the elections, the scales that had for forty years blinded his eyes, regarding his most wonderful son, fell off—away for ever. When young de Comps, Mirabeau's secretary, presented him with a letter from his son, describing his triumphal entries into Aix and Marseilles, after reading it, the old man seized the young man's hands in his, and grasping them warmly, and bursting into tears, cried, "Young man! This is glory—this is true glory!" The obscuring neasma then parted away, and he saw that what he had hitherto taken for an ill-hatched fledgeling, was none other than a proud-necked swan, sailing majestic upon the wave-tossed bosom of the River of Time! Since then, several affectionate interviews had taken place: the old man's sole enjoyment was reading the brilliant orations of his son; he reproved the Barrel for opposing his tremendous brother, and would only read such journals as contained somewhat relative to Mirabeau.

'T was a serene and tranquil summer's even, and the birds sang dear God's melodies around his rural mansion at Argenteuil. The old man sat, in the

now fading sunshine, at an open window; his lovely grandchild, the Marchioness of Arragon, the eldest child of his beloved daughter, Madame du Saillant, was reading to him. She made an error in her speech, and he corrected her; apologizing for her carelessness, she was about to recontinue, when she observed he did not breathe: she took him in her arms, and he did not move—her cries attracted others, and, when they arrived, they found that the old marquis sat there, smiling, with a slight colour on his cheeks—and DEAD! He was seventy-four. Forty years previous, he had said that such stumbling governments as France had, must, sooner or later, end in a general outbreak: and now, when that outbreak was just outbreaking, the cord is snapped, and the golden-bowl broken, and another spirit returns into its other home.

They buried him in the parish church of the Bénedictines, at Argenteuil: and when, a year later, this church was being sacrificed to the necessities of the nation, the syndic of the place was ordered by the commission to preserve it, for the sake of the old man's tomb, and for the love of the old man's son. "The administration declares that it takes under its particular care the tomb of Victor de Riquetti, ci-devant Marquis of Mirabeau, and that of his mother; and it charges specially the municipality of Argenteuil to watch attentively over their preserva-

tion, for respect to the memory of the Friend of Man, and of the father of the Friend of Liberty!" So ran the decree.

There is nothing more honourable to Mirabeau than his large quality of forgiveness. During the whole length of his tempestuous life, we find no instance of revengeful malignity, or stern unforgetfulness of wrong; and his love for his father stands, amid his troublous career, a very gem. At that precise time, the people of Paris were about to elect their mayor, and numerous friends urged Mirabeau to offer himself as candidate; but, though almost certain of election, he declined, being determined to devote himself to the obsequies of his father, the conducting whereof he had entirely taken upon himself.* He appeared for a few moments in the assembly, and then rode away, twice a day, to Argenteuil; and at the very moment when impartial history writes him down as spending his leisure in the intriguing den of the Palais Royal, and all but heading the Bastillers, he was far away in quiet from it all, superintending the funereal ceremonies of his father!

From the 10th to the 16th must have seemed like one huge dream-chaos to Mirabeau. On the 11th, the king's reply, and an oration from Mirabeau thereon. On the 12th, the tidings of his father's

* Bailli was elected.

demise and Necker's dismission, and the calling to office of Bréteuil, de Broglie, Foulon, &c., all ultra-royalists, and wedded firmly to the *ancien régime*. The 13th, busy with his father's funeral preparations, and a hurried attendance at the Assembly; to give his vote in favour of an address to the king, stating, that the dismissed ministers carried with them the regrets of the nation, and that the king's advisers were alone responsible for all evils, present and to come. On the 14th, the marquis's interment, and the astounding tidings of the storming of the Bastille. Thus when, on the 15th, he once more gave himself up to the business of the state, the crisis of the times had most fearfully advanced.

Broglie, and his fellow-ministers had, of course, adopted a coercive policy, and more troops were pouring into Versailles; the taking of the Bastille being the assigned cause: but it was publicly rumoured that this outbreak in Paris was to be made a pretext for dissolving the States. The preceding evening a drunken festival had sent an inundation of intoxicated German soldiers upon the town, who revealed too lavishly the anti-revolutionary designs of their commanders. In this juncture, the assembly decided upon sending a third deputation to the king, praying for the removal of the troops. The president for several minutes had been submitting to the selected deputies, forms in which to couch their message, all

of the driest and most tedious parliamentary circumlocution; when suddenly, as if by inspiration, Mirabeau started up, and interrupted him, rolling out, in one unbroken fire-ebullience, these immortal words:—

"Monsieur le President, tell the king that the foreign hordes by which we are surrounded, have yesterday received the visit of princes, of princesses, of male and female court favourites,* and their caresses, their exhortations, and their presents; tell him, that all the night these foreign satellites, gorged with money and with wine, have predicted in their disgusting songs the slavery of France, and that their brutal wishes have invoked the destruction of the National Assembly; tell him that, in his very palace, the courtiers danced to the sound of that barbarous music, and that such was the prelude to Saint Bartholomew!

"Tell him that Henri, whose memory the universe adores, the one of all his ancestors he should select for a model, sent provisions into revolted Paris when besieging it in person, and that *his* inhuman councillors have turned back the corn-supplies which commerce is carrying to that Paris,† faithful and famishing."

* The Queen, Madame de Polignac, and others, visited some regiments, to fan the flame of loyalty by their fascinations.

† Fearing that it might be necessary to reduce Paris to quiet by famine, the ministry had forbidden grain to be forwarded from Versailles to Paris.

With these flame-words and the deafening plaudits of the Assembly ringing in their ears, the deputation was about setting out for the palace; when they were informed that the king, alone and without escort, was on his way to them. "Let a mournful respect," said Mirabeau, "be the first welcome given to the monarch. In a moment of public calamity, the silence of the people is the lesson of kings!"

Nothing is more mildly beautiful than the speech of the king on this occasion. He called the assembly the National Assembly; he told them, that, trusting in his people's fidelity, he had ordered back the military. "You mistrust me," he concluded. "Well, then, I will confide in you." At these words the whole Assembly arose, and with loud resounding vivats, escorted him back to the palace. O, could some unseen power have but extinguished for a season the queen and her proud vindictive colleagues, and left the gentle monarch to pursue his own conciliatory paths, all might even then have been well. But it was not to be so. Europe had to be taught by fearful experience, that when a nation, flinging aside God's edicts—instead of each man pushing his own fortunes resolutely, injuring no other man by so doing—arises in rude riot to drag down good and bad into one promiscuous and degraded level; anarchy, blood-shed, mob-despotism, and general misery are the only possible results.

CHAPTER IV.

ADDRESS TO THE KING — NECKER'S RECALL — VISIT TO THE RUINS OF THE BASTILLE — MASSACRE OF FOULON AND BERTHIER — SPEECH IN FAVOUR OF THE INVIOLABILITY OF LETTERS — RIGHTS OF MAN — ORATION IN SUPPORT OF THE VETO — BRILLIANT EFFUSION — THE MOB AT VERSAILLES.

July 15th to October 6th, 1789.

THE title of Marquis devolved upon Mirabeau by his father's death; but he would not adopt it, considering that he had made that of Count more famous. His father had died in disordered circumstances, so that little or no monetary benefit accrued from his accession to the family estates; the marquis having speculated in philanthropy and economy, until he had run all his lands into the hands of mortgagees.

The dismission of the troops was a signal victory, and every confidence might have been placed in the king personally; but so long as he was surrounded by his

ultra advisers, that confidence could be but dubious, and the truce then established between the court and the people very hollow. Barnave, on the 15th, proposed an address, praying for the dismissal of the ministers, and the recall of the popular cabinet. Mirabeau supported this, and on the 16th submitted to the Assembly the form of an address, wherein a manly exposition of the dangers of sinister advisers, and the culpability of such counsellors, is judiciously blended with the most scrupulous loyalty and enthusiastic affection for the monarch himself. While the Assembly were engaged in passing this, news reached them of the resignation of de Broglie and two others; a deputation was therefore sent, merely to request the dismissal of the remainder. In the discussion previous to sending this, Mounier had denied the right of the Assembly to interfere at all with the king's choice of ministers, and stated that the House of Commons impeaching these at times had been *the ruin of England.* Mirabeau replied in a long speech, in which we read—

"But look, you remark, at Great Britain, what popular tumults are created in that kingdom by the very right you are laying claim to! It is that which has ruined England—England ruined! God eternal! what lamentable intelligence! From what quarter did the mischief come? What earthquake, what convulsion of nature has devoured that illus-

trious island—that inexhaustible treasury of brilliance—that classic land of the lovers of liberty? But you comfort me; for England still flourishes for the eternal instruction of the world!"

On the 17th, the king visited Paris, where he was well received: a woman, however, administering a merited rebuke to his want of decision, by flinging herself on her knees, and saying, "O, sire, but are you really sincere?" On the same day, as though to enter a protest against the king's conciliatory conduct, the Count of Artois, Prince Condé, the Polignacs, Lambescs, and the whole body of the *ancien régimists* fled from France.

At the same time as the king's journey to Paris, Mirabeau paid that city a visit in order to examine the ruins of the Bastille. Dumont accompanied him, and as there is no date to be wrong in, and no oration to lay claim to, his account may be relied on. "It was," he says, "a triumphal procession for Mirabeau. The crowd in the Rue St. Antoine and the adjacent parts opened to afford him a passage: poems and flowers were thrown in to him, and his carriage was filled with books and manuscripts taken from the ruins of the fortress."*

On the 21st, Necker was recalled, and on the 22d occurred the horrid massacre of Foulon and Berthier in the streets of Paris. The same evening Mirabeau,

* Dumont, p. 305.

in rendering an account thereof in his nineteenth letter, thus expresses himself.

"But let us hasten to state that the continuation of this popular dictation would expose the public liberty more than the plots of its enemies. Society would soon become dissolved, if the multitude, accustoming themselves to blood and to disorder, placed themselves above the magistrates, and braved the authority of the laws. *Instead of flying to liberty, the people would soon cast itself into the abyss of slavery; for too often danger rallies absolute rule, and, in the midst of anarchy, a despot may even seem a saviour.*"*

This seems almost prophetic of a lapse into a reign of terror and anarchy, and a salvation by Napoleon. The "popular dictation" did continue, and it was as Mirabeau had said. On the 23rd, Lally-Tollendal presented a form of proclamation to the people, reprehending these dreadful excesses. But Mirabeau opposed this; arguing that it was not good to reply to deeds by any other manner than by deeds again; he therefore called upon the Assembly immediately to adopt some method of strengthening the municipalities, so that in future the evil-disposed might be kept in continual check. On the 25th, it was proposed that several letters of the king's brother, the Count of Artois, to the French minister at Geneva, which had been intercepted since his flight, should be

* 19me Lettre à ces Commettans, p. 58.

opened and examined. It is to Mirabeau's honour that he protested long and indignantly against any such proceeding. On the 29th, the subject of a simple majority deciding or three-fourths being required, was discussed, and Mirabeau spoke in favour of the simple majority.

"What is the end of a law requiring three-fourths of suffrages? Simply this, that among twelve hundred as we are, three hundred will have more power to maintain their opinion, than nine hundred would have to control that opinion: that when a proposition has not nine hundred and one voices, it shall be without force; or, what comes to the same thing, that the will of nine hundred who wish one thing, would have to submit before three hundred who wish another. In such a system, where is the justice?"

The part he took in the ensuing debate of the 31st, has subjected him to much undeserved obloquy; his intentions being grossly misinterpreted. Necker, recalled to the helm on the 21st, had experienced a perfect triumph on his return: every town presenting him with addresses, and manifesting many other eccentricities of popular delight. While he was returning in such manner, a few leagues from Paris, he rescued from an attacking mob the Baron de Besenval, who was flying out of France. This gentleman had commanded the troops in Paris on and before the Bastille-day, and had ordered his troops

to disperse a peaceable crowd; in doing which several women and an old man had been slaughtered, and for which act a prosecution was instituted against him. On the 30th, when Necker presented himself at the Hôtel-de-ville, taking advantage of the enthusiasm his return excited, he announced to the people a general amnesty for all offenders of all kinds; and on the 31st, the Assembly was requested to confirm this. Clearly this was an unwarrantable and dangerous action, for by no law could the pardon of a prime minister acquit a culprit; and it was on these grounds, and not as an "opponent of humanity," that Mirabeau demanded the reversion of this amnesty: it was done solely to guard against so dangerous a precedent, and to censure Necker for the liberty he had taken with the king's prerogative. That these were Mirabeau's reasons is evident, both from his speech and from the fact of his ceasing to influence Besenval's prosecution, after he had thus procured his reincarceration.*

On the 1st of August, Mirabeau opposed a motion prohibiting deputies from attending the meetings of the various clubs; which was withdrawn in consequence. The 4th of August is celebrated for being the last day of feudality in France: the country people, being famished and ground down by various barbarous remnants of the feudal times, had risen in many

* Besenval was acquitted January 28th, 1790.

places and burnt the noblemen's châteaux, and all feudal parchments they could seize. To save his life and his non-feudal domains, the Duke of Aiguillon, the largest landed-proprietor in France, determined to side vehemently with the people, and to renounce in full Assembly all his privileges. This he did on the morning of the 4th, and in the evening sitting, as though seized with an infection, the nobles vied with each other in renouncing in hot haste the aggregated gains of a thousand years. Good, bad, and indifferent, all alike fell a sacrifice to this cacoëthes, and they gave a finish to the madness by declaring all these rash renunciations to be law. It was the sublime of revolutionary insanity: but hailed with rapture all over France. Mirabeau was prevented witnessing this memorable scene, by a general meeting of the family, in consequence of his father's recent death. His head, however, appears to have been the only one in France unintoxicated by this delirious self-denial: he applauded it for its good-intent and generosity of purpose, but blamed it for its inconsiderate haste. His private letters and the twenty-second number of the *Courier de Provence* are replete with sarcastic reflections on this memorable sitting. In the latter he says: "For a long time we have reproached the National Assembly with occupying itself upon insignificant objects, with not labouring sufficiently for the general good; and

suddenly, in a single night, it passes by acclamation more than twenty important laws! Such legislating by steam (*tant d'ouvrage en si peu d'heures*) astonishes us: it appears like a dream." *

On the 7th, Mirabeau opposed a motion to except the king's liberties from the law passed on the 4th, abolishing the rights of the chase; it being urged, in defence of the motion, that to abolish them in those liberties was to interfere with the royal prerogative. "In my eyes, gentlemen," said Mirabeau, "the royal prerogative is too illustrious for me to consent that it should consist of the futile privilege of an oppressive pastime:" the motion was rejected. On the 8th and 9th, he supported the ministerial demand for a loan of thirty millions. On the 10th, he supported a measure for abolishing the administration of the oath of allegiance to the army by the municipal officers, on the ground that the soldiery should be altogether unconnected with civil associations of any kind. On the same day he advocated, in a very powerful and argumentative speech, the total abolition of tithes.

"No," he said, "tithes are not property: they have never been for the clergy more than an annual douceur; a simple possession, revocable at the king's pleasure: beyond that, tithes are not even a possession, as has been said: they are a contribution applied

* *Courier de Provence*, No. xxii. p. 2.

to that part of the public service which relates to the ministers of the altar; they are the subsidies wherewith the nation salaries the officers of morality and instruction. The nation abolishes ecclesiastical tithes, because they are an onerous method of paying a portion of the public service to which they are destined, and because it is easy to replace them in a manner less expensive and more equal."

The day following, the Archbishop of Paris, and majority of the clergy voluntarily resigned their tithes. About the same time the Assembly began to occupy itself with the preamble to the celebrated *Rights of Man.* Men of all parties besought them to adjourn the discussion of this important, dangerous, and singularly ridiculous subject; the warmest among whom was Mirabeau in his *Courier de Provence.* To him it seemed absurd for an assembly to be discussing principles, and passing theoretical laws, when the nation was going to ruin for sound practical ones. Selected, however, among a committee of five, for the purpose of drawing up these Rights in a definite form, Mirabeau performed that task almost entirely himself; and on the 17th presented them to the Assembly. The substance of the declaration is too well known to need repetition. The day following, when they came to pass these into law, Mirabeau used all his influence, vainly, t persuade them to postpone the promulgation of these

Rights, until the constitution was finally established; till when, he stated with point, "a declaration of rights is but an almanack for the year."

On the 19th, he attacked a motion for the reduction of the interest on the new loan from the ancient rate of five to four and a half per cent. but was unsuccessful; and on the 22nd, he advocated the responsibility of every member of government, from the very lowest situation to the highest. The legality of the Assembly being acknowledged, and all differences calculated to arrest legislation removed, they were now working at the compilation of a constitution. On the 22nd, a demand having been preferred for some mention being made in the Rights of Man respecting public worship, with an eye to the ascendancy of the Papist Formularies, Mirabeau delivered these notable words.

"I come not to preach tolerance: the most unlimited liberty in religion, is in my eyes a right so sacred, that the word *tolerance*, which is used to express it, appears to me a species of tyranny itself; since the existence of an authority which has the power of toleration endangers liberty of thoughts, by the very fact that it *has* the power to tolerate; and thus has also the power *not* to tolerate.

"But I cannot understand why we treat a question whose day is not yet arrived.

"We are making a declaration *of rights;* it is

therefore absolutely necessary that what any one proposes should be a *right;* otherwise they would enter into the declaration any principles they wished, and this declaration would then become a mere collection of principles. They will, perhaps, say that it is one of the rights of men to respect religion and to maintain it: but is it not evident that this is a *duty* and not a *right?*"

The following day the subject was renewed; and it having been argued by the non-toleration party, that religion, being a matter of external policy, it belonged to government to regulate it; permitting this one, and prohibiting that, Mirabeau replied in the following masterly manner:—

"I ask those gentlemen who maintain that worship is an object of government, whether they speak as Catholics, or as legislators.

"If they raise that objection as Catholics, they agree that worship is a subject for government: that it is a purely civil affair; now if it be civil, it is a human institution; if it be a human institution, it is fallible, since men can change it; whence it follows, according to them, that the Catholic religion is not a divine institution, and according to me, that they are no Catholics!

"If they raise this objection as legislators, I have the right and title as a statesman to speak to them as statesmen; and I tell them at once, that it is

not true that religion is a subject for state-government, although Nero and Domitian have maintained that opinion to interdict that of the Christians.

"Government consists in seeing that no person disturbs the public order and tranquillity: that is the reason why its officers watch in our streets, in our squares, around our houses, and around our temples; but it does not interfere with what you there may do: all its power consists in seeing that what you there do, does not injure your fellow-citizens.

"I find it, therefore, absurd to pretend, that, to prevent the disorder which might arise from your actions, it is necessary to forbid those actions. Assuredly that would be a very expeditious way; but, perhaps, I may be permitted to doubt that any one has that right. To see that no religion, not even your own, disturbs public repose, that is your duty; further than that, you cannot go!"

The Assembly compromised the matter, by declaring that "*no citizen should be disquieted for his opinions, even religious ones,*" and as that decision rather denied than asserted perfect freedom of conscience, it met with a severe attack from Mirabeau in the *Courier de Provence.*

On the 27th, Lally Tollendal, as chairman of the Committee of the Constitution, demanded to be informed whether the king would be allowed to have an absolute, or merely a suspensive, veto. On

the 1st of September this was discussed. Never had a subject so thoroughly aroused the country; people who did not understand its meaning in the slightest, bellowed out against the veto: one man was heard to inquire, savagely, *in what district he* (the veto) *lived, that they might hang him to the lantern!** In fact, it was currently reported that Paris was on the eve of marching up to the Assembly to compel it to refuse the veto to the king. While popular feeling was at this height, Mirabeau visited Paris, in company with Dumont. "I shall never forget," writes Dumont, "my going to Paris, during this excitement, with Mirabeau, and the mass of people we found waiting for his carriage, round Le Jay, the bookseller's shop. They cast themselves before him, entreating him, with tears in their eyes, not to permit the absolute veto to pass. They were in a frenzy. 'Monsieur le Compte, you are the people's father; you must save us: you must succour us against the scoundrels who would bring back despotism. If the king have the veto, what good is the National Assembly? We are all serfs again, and ruined.' Mirabeau was perfect in such scenes: he answered copiously, but committed himself to nothing."† In the face of all this effervesence, Mirabeau astonished France and the Assembly, by mounting the tribune, on September 1st, and delivering an oration, of some forty

* Toulongeon, i. p. 68. † Dumont, 156.

pages, in favour of the absolute veto. This, though one of the most important of Mirabeau's speeches, it is impossible to insert, from its length; and the connectedness of argument renders it equally impossible to give extracts. Sufficient to say, that his opinion is supported by the example of England, and that his arguments are those of true freedom; which can alone exist under a limited monarchy. An immense majority declared in favour of the suspensive veto. In the 52d number of the *Courier de Provence*, he expounded his views upon the veto again, at great length, under the head of "The Royal Sanction in a New Light."

On the 15th, the subject of the succession, in case of the extinction of the elder Bourbon line, was the order of the day. It was proposed that, despite the Treaty of Utrecht, whereby the kings of Spain were bound never to become kings of France, the Spanish Bourbon branch should be declared the successors to the throne. Foreseeing that such a consummation must occasion a general war, and other undesirable consequences, Mirabeau strenuously combated this mischievous proposal, and demanded that it should be decreed that "no prince, not a native of France, could exercise the regency or sovereign power." The question was left to chance, by merely declaring that the crown was hereditary in direct line, to the exclusion of females alone. Between the celebrated

veto speech on the 1st, and the one still more celebrated on the 24th, of which we are about to speak, though Mirabeau's name appears more or less in every debate, there is nothing worthy notice—nothing save mere parliamentary debatings. On the 19th, M. Volney proposed a batch of decrees relative to the number of deputies, their qualifications, and the duration of the present Assembly; all of which Mirabeau quashed, by reminding the house that their Tennis-Court Oath did not permit them to disperse until the completion of the Constitution, and therefore that these matters were quite extraneous then. Writing of the same thing in his paper, he advocated the English system, of a member resigning and submitting to a re-election on being appointed to a government situation.*

During this period the financial aspect of France had been darkening—darkening even unto the grim blackness of impending bankruptcy. Wherefore, on the 24th of September, was Necker constrained to visit the Assembly, to tell them that the loan of 30,000,000 fr. they had sanctioned, had but yielded 2,000,000 fr.; that the second, of 80,000,000 fr., only 10,000,000 fr.; that, public credit being thus ruined, it was necessary to make a general sacrifice, and that he had come to propose an income-tax of 25 per cent. Every man was to lay down a quarter

* *Courier de Provence*, No. lxxxii. p. 8.

of his income for his country. But the manner in which this speech was received, quickly demonstrated that the Assembly was in no humour for such self-denying edicts. Had Mirabeau been any other than the noble-hearted man he was, he might with one word have ruined Necker in an instant: but private piques were ever in him sacrificed to convictions. In a long speech, he supported Necker's plan in the aggregate, without committing himself to the details thereof at all. This speech produced small effects, and was indignantly attacked. Mirabeau replied, but still the sense of the house was against him and the motion; and they were just on the eve of rejecting it, when, moved by sudden impulse, Mirabeau for the third time rushed into the tribune, and poured forth a last appeal.

"Two centuries of depredations and robberies have created the gulf wherein the kingdom is in danger of being engulphed: it must be filled—this terrible chasm. Well then, behold here the list of the French proprietors; select from among them, the richest, in order to sacrifice the fewest citizens; but select; for shall not a small number perish for the mass of the people? Come, then; these two thousand notables possess sufficient to choke the deficit, re-establish the order of your finances, the peace and prosperity of the kingdom: strike! immolate without pity these wretched victims—cast them in the abyss;

it will then close. You recoil with horror—timid men! pusillanimous men! Alas! can ye not see that in proclaiming a bankruptcy—or, what is yet more odious, in rendering it inevitable without proclaiming it—you will be stained by an act ten thousand times more criminal; and, thing inconceivable, gratuitously criminal? for, after all, that horrible sacrifice would at least wipe off the deficit. And do ye imagine, because you will not have paid, you will then owe nothing? Do you imagine that the thousands, the millions, of men who will lose in an instant, by that terrible explosion, or by its reaction, all that constituted the consolation of their life, and perchance their only means of sustenance; that they will leave you peaceably to fatten on your crime? Stoical contemplators of the incalculable evils which that catastrophe will vomit upon France!—stupid egoists! who fancy the convulsions of despair and of misery will pass, as all others; and so much the more rapid as they are violent!—Are ye certain that so many men without food will leave you tranquil to devour those dishes, of which you have desired to diminish neither the number nor the delicacy? No! you will perish; and in the universal conflagration, you have not shuddered to enkindle, the loss of your honour will not preserve one of your detestable enjoyments! Vote, then, this extraordinary subsidy: may it be sufficient! Vote it, because, if you have

any doubts upon the methods (doubts vague and not enlightened), you have none upon the necessity; none upon impotence to replace it: immediately at the least. Vote it, because the public circumstances suffer no retard, and we should be accountable for all delay. Refrain from demanding time — misfortune cannot grant it. Gentlemen, I remember, concerning a ridiculous motion of the Palais-Royal—* concerning a miserable insurrection which had no importance save in feeble imaginations, or in the perverse designs of some men of evil intentions, you heard these furious words, 'Cataline is at the gates of Rome: and they deliberate.' And truly, there was then around us nor Cataline, nor perils, nor factions, nor Rome. But to-day, bankruptcy—hideous bankruptcy is there: it threatens to consume yourselves, your properties, and your honour —and you deliberate!"

The Assembly was not proof against eloquence like that: amid roof-shaking plaudits, the tax was granted. Madame de Staël was near Mirabeau when he delivered this, and the effect she describes as clearly indescribable. "One felt a *power of life* in his speech of which the effect was prodigious!"†

* The rumour that the Palais-Royal faction were about to march on the Assembly when discussing the Veto, drew from M. Goupil the cr of "Cataline is at the gates of Rome: and they deliberate."

† Œuvres de Madame de Staël, xii. p. 315.

Following up his support briskly, on the 26th Mirabeau proposed a general address to their constituents, to ensure a response to the great monetary appeal. Commissioned to draw one up, he did so instantly; and they would have adopted it upon the spot, but he insisted upon a revision. On the 3rd of October, therefore, he presented it completed; when it was unanimously assented to. It is a splendid composition: but, having been claimed by Dumont (though ourselves distinctly believing that claim, as all others of his, to be entirely and altogether unfounded), we do not insert it.

All this time, since the Bastille day, a dreadful storm had been gathering in the capital: it burst on the 5th and 6th of October. The people had been literally starving; and, impelled by hunger, early in the morning there occurred a hitherto unprecedented fact—a rising of women. In tumultuous wrath and countless numbers they besieged the town-hall for bread. Anxious, under any pretext, to drive off that cluster of buzzing wasps, Maillard, usher of the Châtelet, raised a cry of "To Versailles." Instantly it was taken up, and on rushed the masses, increasing every minute, to Versailles. The scenes enacted there are matters of history, not biography. We may as well, however, state that, after considerable bloodshed, a stormy investment of the palace, they compelled the king and family, and all the

deputies, to return with them in procession to Paris on the afternoon of the 6th. In stormful manner, on the 5th, they filled the Hall of Assembly, and stayed proceedings by their cries of "Bread—no long speeches." Mirabeau rebuked them with fierce language, and was cheered by them even while rebuking. After, when debates were resumed, and a tedious deputy spouting glibly, a woman cried from the gallery, "Where is our little Mirabeau? Let us see him—let us hear him." But Mirabeau spoke to please no mob, and so sat still in scornful and indignant silence.

Having thus mentioned this wonderful event, it now becomes our duty to dispose of some doubts and falsehoods, with which the name of Mirabeau has been plentifully bespattered concerning this outbreak, and other matters; which will be found fully treated of in the succeeding chapter.

CHAPTER V.

AN INQUIRY INTO MIRABEAU'S CONNECTION WITH THE DUKE OF ORLEANS.

THE ridiculous story of Mirabeau having entered into certain midnight plots and conspiracies with his most supreme scoundrelship the Duke of Orleans, of which this Versailles outbreak was at once the consummation and the conclusion, would call from the biographer merely an unqualified denial; were it not that it has lately received additional publicity through the medium of the respective histories of M. Michelet and Mr. Alison. The distorted ravings of the former fanatic would extort no notice from reasonable and thinking men; were it not that they constitute at present the guide-lamp to that frenètic cohort of young men, under whose misguidance France is, we suppose, to be danced away in a meaningless liberty-whirl to universal anarchy. The claims of the latter elegant and learned historian are so known and so appreciated,

that mention thereof from us would be gratuitous! It is because the story has obtained credence from these gentlemen, especially the latter, and been promulgated thereby wholesalely to the world, that this chapter is devoted to: 1st, Demonstrating that the attack on Versailles was totally disconnected with Mirabeau; and, 2ndly, to manifest that no connection at all ever did subsist between the duke and the revolutionary monarch.

1st. *The irruption to Versailles was not caused by any plans in which Mirabeau shared, nor influenced in any way by him.* There are two ways to prove this: first, by showing that the event was spontaneous, as all such ever are, and not produced by secret contrivance at all; and, secondly, that if such were not the case, by showing that there does not exist one shadow of evidence for implicating Mirabeau. In the first place, the true cause of this irruption was a grievous and long-continued scarcity, grown into a terrible famine; and the actual movement was commenced by the ill-advised court-banquet of the 1st of October. At this feast young noblemen, officers of the troops stationed at Versailles, and all the pomp and beauty of the court, had, amid ancient feudal king's-melodies, and general loyal toast-givings, vowed enmity to the Revolution, and trampled into dust the tri-color cockade; adopting in their stead the white ensign of the

Bourbons, plenteously bescattered by beautiful court ladies. The king, queen, and dauphin were present. The queen next day expressed herself delighted with the banquet. It was the tidings of this most foolish demonstration, added to the wholesale rumour that the king was about to fly to Metz, that caused a meaningless rage to seize upon the fierce, starving women; turned, in order to save the town-hall from sacking and from flames, without any ulterior object, to a march on Versailles by the usher, Maillard. This one fact disproves the whole: had not Maillard been anxious to save the venerable Hôtel-de-Ville, the pillage thereof and the robbing of the two or three bakers' shops would have been the sole result. "It is yet a general mistake," says Mignet, "to attribute the greatest revolutionary act to some mere private manœuvring; as if at such an epoch the entire people could be employed as the instrument of one man."* "Was it not D'Orleans, then, and Laclos, Marquis Sillery, Mirabeau, the sons of confusion, hoping to drive the king to Metz, and gather the spoil? Nay, was it not, quite contrariwise, the Œil-de-Bœuf body-guard Colonel de Guiche, minister St. Priest, and high-flying loyalists; hoping, also, to drive him to Metz, and try it by the sword of civil war? Good Marquis Toulongeon, the historian and deputy, feels con-

* Mignet, vol. i. chap. ii.

strained to admit that it was *both*."* And whosoever seeks, instead of selecting the middle, probable, and natural course, to find the truth by reconciling the writers of the time, must be prepared to admit endless such-like contradictions and absurdities. In the second place, waving altogether this ground, and admitting—what every standard historian,† save Mr. Alison, expressly denies—that this was caused by some money-bribes and secret machinations; no proof can be found that Mirabeau was connected therewith. A man connecting himself with the causing of such an outbreak, must have some settled and definite end in view. This is what we accord to an ordinary man; how much more, then, to a Mirabeau? It is totally antagonistic to the opinion one forms of him, to imagine for one moment that that end was simply the creation of confusion and riot: what, then, was the end he struggled for? To drive away the king, and proclaim the Duke of Orleans, answers Alison; re-echoing Besanval, de Moleville, and numerous other ultra-royalists of the old school, who could not possibly have had any means for becoming acquainted with his objects. For which most libellous assertion, what proof can be given? In the most extended sense, none at all. The reader cannot be ignorant that this charge against Mira-

* Carlyle's Revolution, i. p. 343.

† *Vide* Mignet, Thiers, Carlyle, &c.

beau and the Duke of Orleans was, in the October of the following year, made the subject of a judicial inquiry at the Paris Court of the Châtelet; that that court declared that there was ground of accusation against the duke and Mirabeau; that the Assembly demanded the evidence and the report of the trial to be submitted to it; and that, on the receipt thereof, the Abbé Maury, the fiercest opponent of Mirabeau in the Assembly, while attacking the Duke of Orleans, stated distinctly, *that there was no ground of accusation at all against Mirabeau;* and that, after a long and tempestuous harangue from Mirabeau himself, the Assembly almost unanimously acquitted them both. Mirabeau's speech on this occasion has been much censured for its heat and want of argument. But such censurers should bear in mind that there were no arguments to be disproved, and that when a man is branded as a scoundrel, a hot indignant reply is the natural result if he be not so. To us this speech appears as the act of a manly and right-minded man, who, when a blackguard calls him "thief," does not set about procuring testimonials to the effect that he is no thief, but fells the insolent fellow to the earth, and, lion-like, marches on his way, never bestowing a second thought upon the sprawling insignificant! The full detail of this Châtelet evidence lives in print to this day, occupying a considerable volume; and we are

convinced that any unbiassed reader would come to the conclusion, from the numerous contradictions and incongruities of the witnesses, that Mirabeau was entirely innocent. And the court used their full influence to collect this evidence. To the length and tedious copiousness of this trial may be traced the flippant contradictions of many historians: they either siding with the Châtelet or against it, according to their preconceived opinions; this report being too formidable to examine. The present writer, determined, if possible, to hunt out the truth, waded industriously through it; and on arriving at its conclusion, found himself in such a pleasing state of amiable confusion, that beyond the fact of his existence he was unconscious. But when this confusion sea retired, leaving the shells of conviction upon the beach of thought, he decided that, as a proof of Mirabeau's guilt, it was an utter failure, considered morally and legally; and that the Assembly, in rejecting it, did what any English jury in similar circumstances would have done. To this conclusion we came, regarding all the evidence to be true: but when that evidence comes to be examined, the Châtelet-trial appears even more ridiculous. The Fils Adoptif, mentioning that, in the whole trial, only two evidences directly inculpate Mirabeau, we re-examined it, and find that statement to be correct: these are the testimonies of two citizens who deposed that

they saw Mirabeau in the crowd on one of the days, armed and urging on the people: such depositions bear their falsity on their very face. The writers of Lafayette's life, having compiled their work from that general's multitudinous notes, state on his authority, that these depositions were unfounded; and Lafayette himself says regarding the whole evidences, "*These, as related to Mirabeau, were entirely without foundation.*"* Besides this evidence of the Châtelet, early in 1791, when the whole affair had been decided, Mounier, the ancien-régimist, published a volume on the subject, entitled, "An Appeal to the Tribunal of Public Opinion," (Geneva, 1791), wherein he brings forth a little fresh evidence; but of no weight. This consists of two conversations of Mirabeau's; in one of which he confided to Mounier, and another ultra-royalist friend, his intention of dethroning Louis for the advantage of the Duke of Orleans; which bears its controversion along with it. No man plotting to overthrow Queen Victoria would make the Duke of Wellington or Lord John Russell his confidants in the matter; and if Mirabeau did mention such a scheme to avowed enemies like Mounier, that very fact alone would prove that there was nothing whatever in it. The other is, that a few moments before the mob arrived at Versailles, Mirabeau strode across to Mounier, then

* Lafayette's Memoirs, by his Family, i. 348.

president, saying, "Mounier, Paris is marching upon us," (*Paris marche sur nous*); which, of course, proves that he had secret information, think his accusers. But in an open assembly like the hall of the States, where men came in and out, mingling with the deputies, and many times in a sitting notes and messages reached the deputies; what is more natural than that one of that mighty crowd, a friend of order, should have wished to acquaint the Assembly of the approaching danger, and, not knowing who might be president that week, sent the information to Mirabeau, being the member most likely to take energetic steps. Mounier forgets to argue, from the remainder of Mirabeau's words, that he was opposed to the outbreak: that remainder being an advice to Mounier to pretend sickness, and so run over to the palace to acquaint the king of the coming storm; thus giving him time to take measures for his safety.

So much for the proofs adduced to support this charge? And now what proofs have we on the opposite side. First, we have, and it is not wholly despicable, Mirabeau's positive denial in full Assembly; next, that in all his letters to Mauvillion and other private friends, the greatest disgust is expressed at this charge: and concealment was in no case a fault of his. Then the Prince d'Arenberg, at that time Count de Lamarck, confidential agent and friend of the king and queen, and friend also of Mirabeau, has

left in the hands of the Fils Adoptif an unpublished document on this subject: written in a state of much excitement, against the revolution, owing to the ruin of the monarchy. In this he expressly denies the charge, assigning the best reasons of all; a personal knowledge of Mirabeau's haunts and habits, and, in many instances, the ability to prove an alibi. "The queen," he writes, "asked me if Mirabeau had not mingled in the horrors of the 5th and 6th of October: it was exceedingly easy to assure her on that point, as *I had passed the day of the 5th almost entirely with him.*"* And again, "the idea of finding himself under the weight of such a supposition overwhelmed him: when I told him that the queen included him in her suspicions, his face assumed a frightful colour, and he manifested the utmost indignation at the very supposition."† Mirabeau had not the faculty for assumption of any passion; and no man has ever preferred against him the charge of dissimulation or deceit: coming therefore from the unquestionable authority this does—from a prince whose name every lover of loyalty and nobility of soul must honour—this testimony is worth the whole volume of the Châtelet evidence. But the strongest and concluding argument has yet to come. Mirabeau wished to dethrone Louis and place Orleans in his stead, it is asserted. Now, just for one moment look

* Fils Adop. vi. 332. † *Ibid.* vi. 324.

over his acts in the Assembly since the opening, and see how he shaped his course that way. In every speech, oration, address, in which he had any share, the most exalted loyalty and devotion to the monarch are the distinguishing features; and he never loses an opportunity in the tribune and in his newspaper, of painting the king in the fairest and most laudatory colours. It is hardly the way to succeed in deposing a sovereign to make the nation believe him a perfect monarch: well-nigh a saint. Had such been his views, would he not have been in advance of the people in their fast increasing king-hatred, instead of confronting them and risking his popularity by inculcating reverence for the sovereign. Had Mirabeau, at the taking of the Bastille, when Paris was mad against the court—had he preached a crusade against Louis and his newly-selected advisers, he might have had their fortunes and lives in his hands directly. But his course was to censure the disturbances, and to vote a respectful and loyal address to the king. His vote on the veto, too, was not that of one who was endeavouring to compass the king's ruin. And, lastly, on the memorable occasion of Necker's income-tax, when the fabulous plot must have been well-nigh completed, and, consequently, when national bankruptcy and the anarchy he so vividly described would have ensured it success, his conduct alone secured the temporary

stability of the throne. And in the address to the people, of October 1st, from his pen, we find these words, "O, thou so justly loved by your people! king, upright man, and good citizen! While the love of France for your sacred person murmurs at your privations, their feeling applauds your noble courage, and their generosity will return your benefits, as you desired when you bestowed them, by imitating your virtues, and by giving you the joy of having guided the nation in the career of the common weal!" It is hardly a likely method to induce people to rebel against a monarch, that of speaking of him in a national address in such terms. No! The reader has two courses, and but two: either to fling these unsubstantiated *on-dits* to the winds for valueless trash as they are; or else, for the sake of maintaining this theory of his league with Orleans, to throw overboard the whole known character of the man during his forty years of private life and two years public career: his habits and opinions, as found by all who knew him; his principles, as expressed in his earliest publications, and maintained unto his death.

II. *He had never at any time, or for any purpose, any connection with the Duke of Orleans.* We shall treat this very briefly; as the former arguments to some extent prove this assertion. We must protest against the system under which the charge of a con-

spiracy with the Duke of Orleans is preferred. It is not, as it should be, said; "this is the fact, thus we prove it," but "this is the fact, *disprove* it if you can." This is manifestly unfair, and the exact reverse of what should be. We might assert from a few paltry insinuations, that a criminal connection existed between Queen Elizabeth and Leicester, and then strutting about self-satisfied, like a hen that has laid some dirty egg and is proud thereat, cluck out ceaselessly, "Disprove it, disprove it;" and there is no man living that could disprove it: but should it therefore be writ down in history so? By no means. And yet the story of Mirabeau's connection with Orleans rests on as slender authority; being simply and solely based on the excited statements of zealous partisans, his enemies, who, from a complete ignorance of both parties, could know nothing. Take the historians who support the charge, and they will refute it among themselves, by the very contradictions they make. Mr. Alison makes the connection last till after the 6th of October.* M. Michelet finishes it at the Bastille taking;† and Lamartine, having investigated the case, and finding that the position of there being an actual liaison is untenable, merging off into a sublime eccentricity, states that Mirabeau proposed plans to the duke, which that individual—

* Alison, ii. chap. v. † Michelet (Bohn's ed.), 164.

whose character was one huge mass of cowardice, beastliness, and prurient villany—refused to take share in; being a "patriot," and having no personal ambition.* And Madame de Staël cuts it shorter still: saying, "Mirabeau *sounded* his moral courage in several interviews, and convinced himself speedily that no political enterprise could be founded on such a character."† Thus, between them, a beautiful tale is made out; pleasingly consistent. How much more sensible the view taken by M. Thiers. "Many inconsiderate expressions," he says, "have caused him to be frequently accused of being one of the Duke of Orleans's party; although in reality, he never was. His pecuniary distresses, his indiscreet language, his familiarity with the Duke of Orleans, *although he was on the same terms with every one else*, his proposition in respect of the Spanish succession, and, finally, his opposition to the departure of the duke, all naturally excited suspicion; *yet it is nevertheless true that Mirabeau was without any party*, and even without any other object than the extinction of the aristocracy and arbitrary rule. The author of those suppositions should have learned that Mirabeau was at that time obliged to borrow the most paltry sums; which certainly would not have been the case had he been the agent of a prince so immensely rich, and who is

* Lamartine's Girondists (Bohn's ed.), i. 362.

† Œuvres de Madame de Staël, iii. 309.

supposed to have been nearly ruined by his partisans."* This appears to us to be the true view of the case; for when Mr. Alison asserts, that in June, 1789, he removed to a superb house, and it was therefore evident he was receiving the money of Orleans,† he commits an anachronism; as it was not till after several months that this took place: not till after he admits all connections between them had ceased.

The cause of all these false statements and fabulous assertions was the same which ruined the king —that of looking for a petty under current of plot, when the treasures were being swept away by the popular surface-current. All was suspicion. If in those days, one man met another and said "fine morning," and on that day an *émeute* took place, he was fortunate if he was not charged with having had share in it; the argument being that, when he said "fine morning," he meant "fine morning *for a riot!*" On this principle, Mirabeau, the most illustrious and most courted man of the time, could not go occasionally to visit the Palais Royal, where all the wit and talent of Paris assembled, but he was hatching plots: he could not be intimate with the Duke of Orleans, but he was in a conspiracy with him; although he was as intimate with every eminent man in Paris, from Desmoulins, Danton, and the

* Thiers's History of the Revolution, pp. 42 and 43. (Whittaker's trans. ed.)

† Alison, ii. 64.

low clubbists, to Cazalès, de Lamarck, and the high aristocrats.

Wishing to illustrate his view of a limited monarchy,—which was, that the king was nothing as an individual, but merely as a recognised head; which, while a bulwark against the feuds of personal ambition, was no drawback to the popular will—to illustrate this idea of the personal non-importance of the king, he could not say, "What matters it whether the king be called Louis XVI. or Louis XVII.?" but it reveals an invidious design to elevate the duke by the overthrow of the other; it being entirely lost sight of, that if this speech meant anything beyond the mere illustration (which would have been as complete if he had said Nero or Trajan), the Dauphin would be the Louis XVII. meant thereby. He cannot express an opinion of the Duke of Orleans, in strong true language, "He is an eunuch for crime—he would do it, but cannot," but it is because the duke failed in plans which he had concocted for their mutual benefit; forgetting that nothing was more natural than for him to pass an opinion upon a leading character of the day. On the same ground it might be argued, because foreseeing the villainous tendency of Robespierre and the extreme left, he said, of that individual, that "he would go far," it was because he had proposed a joint reign of terror to that

deputy, who had repulsed his advances, wishing to monopolize that era to himself. Bertrand de Moleville, and others, who never spent a moment in Mirabeau's society, were perfectly acquainted with his connection with Orleans; while Dumont and de Lamarck, who scarcely ever lost sight of him, knew nothing about it, disbelieved it, and denied it; and Lafayette, who knew more about such things than any of the aristocratic historians, totally denies it in many places, although no friend to Mirabeau.

But enough of this. The whole affair is so ridiculous, so empty, that were it not that through the insertion of these paltry untruths, history gets miswritten, we had not cared to argue the matter. As it is, we have endeavoured to demolish one venerable lie, and so do the world a service. The historian who loves facts, will do well to state that, owing to the excited state of party feeling, Mirabeau was accused of having leagued with the Duke of Orleans to subvert the throne; but that there was in reality no political connection whatever between them.

CHAPTER VI.

FORESIGHT AND MISGIVINGS OF MIRABEAU—BRIEF ALLIANCE WITH LAFAYETTE—THE ASSEMBLY AT PARIS — MIRABEAU'S SHARE IN THE DEBATES—GREAT SPEECH ON THE SUBJECT OF THE CLERICAL PROPRIETORS, AND ON THE GENEVESE LOAN.

From October 6th to the end of 1789.

IMAGINING that the Duke of Orleans was, at any rate to some extent, the promoter of these outbreaks, Lafayette desired to remove him; and, by threatening and so terrifying him, succeeded in prevailing upon that pusillanimous debauchee to consent to retire to England on an honourable mission. This appeared to Mirabeau a most dangerous and unwarrantable action on the part of Lafayette: an assumption of the sovereign judicial power; and, as used against a member of the Assembly, highly unconstitutional. He publicly announced, that, in case the

duke was driven away by such means, he should impeach Lafayette; and the duke hearing this decided upon remaining: but fear obtaining the mastery, he again changed and departed; Mirabeau exclaiming, "He is not worth the trouble that is taken for him." This conduct on the part of Mirabeau must not be taken for a support of the Duke of Orleans as an individual, but as a deputy to the States, intimidated by the threatenings of power: had Maury, or Lameth, or any other member of the Assembly, been used in similar manner, there can be no doubt Mirabeau would have protested in the same strain; for the line of conduct was clearly unwarrantable. The affair at Versailles, and the return to Paris, seemed to have convinced Mirabeau that, as far as the royal absoluteness was concerned, destruction had done its work; and that reconstruction, or rather consolidation, was now at once to be commenced. While all France was rejoicing in the king's return to Paris, and poor people watched day and night in the cold to see his figure pass the window, and all was delirium and self-gratulation, Mirabeau's foresight and strong calculating powers enabled him to perceive that it was not such a glorious thing as was considered: that in entering the Tuileries, Louis had just placed manacles upon himself; that, in fact, royalty was in imminent peril. In such a crisis, Mirabeau was too generous not to act irrespective

of personal pique. About the 10th of October, he forwarded the following note to Lafayette; a man to whom he had a personal aversion, but which the danger of the crown caused him to forget. It is overflowing with manly frankness.

"There is a man in the State who, by his position, is in the midst of all the events; who cannot even compensate for reverses by success, and who, to some extent, is guarantee of the public repose: one might almost say of the State's safety, which comprises at once the means of sustenance, the finances, the obedience of the army, and the peace of the provinces. Who is that man? It is M. de Lafayette. What are the means whereby he attains this power? A portion of the public forces which he holds in his hand, and his influence with all the agents of the executive power.

"That public force of which he disposes is an obstacle as well as a means: it would be powerless if sustenance failed;* it would turn itself even against its chief; that is evident. M. de Lafayette ought therefore to be able to answer for the means of sustenance; to answer to-day, to-morrow: every day and every instant.

"What are his resources for being answerable for the sustenances? Nearly none at this moment. For that reason, it is incontestible that the opera-

* The reader must remember that there was a very terrible scarcity.

tion of the Commune of Paris does not suffice; that the operation of the public force, even within a radius of fifteen leagues, does not suffice better: it is therefore necessary that there should be another concentration of power, and of all the agents of authority. But so long as M. de Lafayette, has no *minister* acting with him, he cannot calculate on this concentration.

"The public force of which the same individual disposes will finally become, will become soon, an embarrassing burden, without finances; and it is evident that these will be drained in the very instant when aggravated wants cry out for plenty.

"What are the resources of M. de Lafayette for providing finances? None, if the actual ministers will not assist him; and nearly none, even supposing that their intentions are not, as I think, adverse to him. The time is at hand when small means will not suffice for great things, when small resources will not suffice for great evils. It is therefore necessary, under this new aspect, that M. de Lafayette should have a minister who can enter perfectly into his views, and coincide with him upon all points, and under all circumstances.

"The public force which is in his hands may even become very impotent, if the heads of the army refuse to obey; if the provinces separate themselves: isolate and dismember themselves; first by declaration,

and then by open force. The disquieting symptoms are already known: Brittany runs to arms; an ambitious leader, a jealous and personal enemy menaces the frontiers; another misunderstands the orders of the king; a province, whose fire is redoubtable, is illegally convoking its states,* and appears vacillating.

"What are the means M. de Lafayette possesses to prevent this impending dislocation? Nearly none, for his portion of the public force would be nothing to oppose all that. First, unity of counsel, unity of action, and the coalition of all kinds of power alone could do somewhat; but if M. de Lafayette has no minister to act with him, how could he bring about that union of efforts? The second means M. de Lafayette possesses is his influence; but all influence is small, when it turns upon sustenance and finance. Eloquence, virtues, public opinion, will not yield bread when corn fails, and will not give money without a plan of finances. Influence is a very active means for calming and retaining the provinces; but it requires to be seconded. Faith in a single man is a gift of God, and cannot be counted on. What, therefore, will usefully serve the influence of M. de Lafayette? To give ministers to him, who will associate themselves with his

* Mounier had retired to Dauphiné, and was raising a counter-revolution.

patriotic intentions as with his glory: who will not give an inverse motion to the wheels of the same machine; who will not discourage him by inaction, nor impede him by plans contrary to his views; who, in fine, faithful at once to the people's interests and to the monarch's, to political union and to personal friendship, will not separate their head from his, should it be necessary to lean it on the daïs of triumph, or on the scaffold.

"The man it is useful to retain* will depart, they say, in two months: in that case he would leave behind him evils without remedy. It is, therefore, preferable, since the State is of more value than a single man, that he should depart, while there is yet time to save all things. His retreat is, without doubt, one new peril; but in removing that peril they do not foresee all the others; and I had much rather ward off ten blows than succumb to nine, through not having dared to act owing to a dread of ten."

This letter manifests an immense insight into character; and the insidious sops given to Lafayette's vanity had their due effect: a meeting was held shortly after at the house of Mirabeau's niece, the Marchioness of Arragon, at Passy, whereat Lafayette and Mirabeau, with Alexandre de Lameth, and another or two, were present. But the characters of the two

* Necker.

leading men were so diametrically opposite, that no union was possible between them. Lafayette was wedded to a barren theory of republican principles, which he was determined to act upon, practicable or not. Mirabeau scorned all formulas, and flung aside all idealic dreamings; making it his chief business to ascertain what was practicable, and to do that: satisfied that a medium, actable theory was far better than a faultless, impracticable one. Then, again, Mirabeau's popularity was always with himself a secondary consideration: he scorned from his soul the applauses of the mob; but with Lafayette popularity was the one great principle of life. There was as much difference between Mirabeau and Lafayette, as between Hamlet and a modern burlesque. The former with his strong self-will, his wonderful eloquence, contempt of world-praise, and transcendant genius, was the Atlas of France; the latter, flying here and there in dapper blue coat, on white charger, haranguing, squabbling, and tenaciously watching his popularity, was the mountebank of the Revolution. The interview came to nothing, and was not renewed. There is no detailed account of this meeting; but from the fragmentary descriptions remaining, it would seem that they both agreed that royalty was to be saved: that Mirabeau proposed bold and startling plans, all calculated to save it; that Lafayette wanted his sublime theories to be

adopted, all calculated to have no effect; that so, mutually disappointed, they separated: Mirabeau calling the general a "Grandison Cromwell,"—a name which ever must remain, so long as that of Lafayette survives, as the best description of the man which human words could possibly convey. Historians who, crime-extenuating, seek to exculpate that rascality which deluged France with blood, by laying every evil to court-intrigues and royal short-sightedness, blame the king for not having taken advantage of this alliance between Lafayette and Mirabeau: they should, however, bear in mind, that, in reality, there never was any alliance between them; beyond the knowledge that each was a friend of order, and averse to such insults as had been put upon the king. In the melancholy story of the Revolution, there is so much royal blundering and blindness, that it is not good to lay imaginary instances of such to their charge.

Great an event as was the bringing the king and the Assembly to Paris, it did not impede the *en avant* spirit of that last-named body. There being no proper place ready to receive them in Paris, they took up their temporary quarters in the palace of the Archbishop, and recommenced their debates on the 7th; the very day after their tumultuous removal. On that day, Mirabeau spoke on one or two insignificant questions. On the 8th, he proposed that "by

the grace of God" should be retained in all State papers; "because," he said, "these words are a homage to religion: a homage which is due from all people of the world, and the terms are precious as rallying point among men." In consequence of the numerous departures of royalists from the country, and the gradually increasing number of the emigrants over the frontiers, on the 9th, Mirabeau supported a motion for refusing passports to such as could not give a satisfactory reason for their departure: at the same time explaining that he deemed every individual had perfect right to travel where, when, and how he liked; but that the present edict was demanded by events, wrung from them by necessity. On their coming to Paris, most of the ancien-régimist leaders had been hooted and attacked by the mob, and their lives placed in jeopardy; on the 10th, therefore, they proposed that a new decree of the inviolability of the deputies should be promulgated: this Mirabeau opposed, and in that opposition the strong practical essence of his mind is apparent.

"Do not multiply," he cried, "vain declarations: revive the executive power; know how to maintain it; support it by the succour of all good citizens; or else society must fall into dissolution, and nothing can preserve us from anarchy! Let us, therefore, rest content with our ancient decrees: there is far more grandeur in maintaining them than in renew-

ing them. Let the executive power act; if it can do nothing, if our decrees are null, society is dissolved, and nothing is left for us but to lament over its disruption."

But Mirabeau's love of order and hatred of the daily increasing mob domination, did not blind his eyes to the culpable rashness of the ultra-royalist party: in the course of his speech, he proceeded to show that these insults were brought upon themselves by their own most foolish speeches to the people.

"It is," he concluded, "publicly reported that a minister, and that minister is M. de St. Priest, said to the crowd of women demanding bread,—'*When you had only one king, you did not want bread; now you have eleven hundred, address yourselves to them.*' I demand that the Committee of Inquiries be instructed to examine into this report."

M. de St. Priest addressed an exculpatory letter to the president of the Committee, and Mirabeau prepared a fierce reply: but, his generosity telling him that it was hardly fair for him to denounce a minister in an Assembly where he, being a minister, had no right of speech; he did not speak this, but published it as a letter. It was entitled, "*Letter addressed to the Committee of Inquiries by the Count of Mirabeau.*" (Paris, 1789.) Lally Tollendal, who, disgusted with the revolution, had retired into Switzer-

land, took upon himself to reply to this, and sent forth upon the world a fuliginous pamphlet, called, "Observations of the Count of Lally Tollendal," &c.; in which, if he does not outargue his opponent, he at least outblusters him.

On the 19th, the Assembly transferred its sittings to the Salle de Manège, and commenced debating *in propriâ formâ* in Paris. On this occasion, Lafayette and Bailli presented themselves at the bar to congratulate the Assembly on assuming their place in the metropolis; and to promise, the one as mayor, the other as general, the maintenance of their peace and freedom of debate. Taking the lead, as ever, Mirabeau rose and proposed a vote of thanks in a very powerful speech; wherein his antipathy to popular hubbub shines forth so conspicuous, that the journals of Desmoulins, Marat, and others, denounced Mirabeau in the bitterest manner, as an enemy of the people.

As this commencement of the Paris sittings is a break in the history of the Assembly, which does not again occur in Mirabeau's lifetime; and as, moreover, it had then become consolidated, and the talents of each pretty clearly developed, we cannot choose a better place for giving a slight sketch of the various other speakers of the Assembly.

The reader will very likely be aware that the Assembly was divided into two portions, occupying

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each half of the hall, and called respectively the *coté droit* or right side, and the *coté gauche* or left. The latter professed the revolutionary principles, but in different shades and complexion: there was Barnave, who was a kind of incipient republican, and the Lameths, Robespierre, and some few of his clique, who deposed a sovereign of refinement and education, to believe in and adore the sovereignty of pickpockets and ignorant idlers—screech-owls in the domain of anarchy; and there were the constitutional moderate-monarchists, such as Sièyes. Each of these had their particular party, known all over France. Mirabeau alone leagued with no party—led no party: he was himself a party, and in that particularity did he shoot aloft so supremely great; because while others, wedded to some dry theory, fought for that, and would have it, tenable or untenable, he alone examined measures by the ungreened glasses of candid criticism and unbiassed fact-seeking judgment; and, if he found them to be good and practicable, supported them—if not, opposed. The right were the opponents of the revolution, and, so far, were one united party.

The Assembly contained many *debaters* and *speakers;* but Mirabeau was the sole *orator,* of both it and of the Revolution. On the right, only two were very eminent—the Abbé Maury and Cazalès. The former was chiefly notorious for his inflexible courage:

with the utmost fearlessness, he opposed the measures dearest to the people; and supported his part with such vehemence and sophistry, as rendered him more famous than the real merit of his speeches justifies. He either spoke in hot-invective or the shallowest sophistry. "When he is wrong," said Mirabeau, "I argue with him; when he is right, I crush him." Cazalès was a headlong, impetuous man, noticeable, not for the polish of his style or the learning of his matter, but for rugged earnestness and zealous vigour: he was a military man, and had more of the roughness of the mess-room than the finish of the cabinet. Barrel Mirabeau also spoke frequently, in a kind of fiery, drunken style; always in opposition to his brother. The left contained, unquestionably, the talent of the nation. Sièyes was a most consummate debater, but his style never rose beyond conversational fluency. Talleyrand also debated well, spoke with ease, and rivalled, nay beat, the Abbé Maury in Jesuitism and sophistry. These were generally in Mirabeau's favour; being constitutionalists. Barnave was the finest speaker, however; but he required preparation; he was essentially no orator: his words were not the impulsive language of the moment, as an orator's ever must be, but were the result of study. Many times Barnave delivered an oration carefully prepared, in which he seemed almost to gain an advantage over Mirabeau;

but it was when Mirabeau, without a minute's preparation, stepped into the tribune, and replied in lengthened eloquence, carrying away by storm the plaudits of the Assembly, while Barnave again responded, but in a lame and impotent manner, that it became manifest who was the stronger. It is thus that the difference between an *elocutionist* and an orator is seen. Robespierre had then no weight, or even notoriety: he spoke frequently, but in the dullest and most pedantic manner. The two Lameths were very pleasing speakers; and beyond those there were none whose frequency and importance require notice. The names of Lafayette, Bailli, Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, St. Etienne, and others, frequently are seen in the debates; but never either at great length, or as originating or opposing important measures.

Such was the state of the Assembly when it then set itself anew to the formation of the constitution on the 19th of October. On the 21st, a phrenetic mob massacred, in the most revolting and hideous manner, a hatter named François; making his then-pregnant wife kiss the bloody lips of her slaughtered husband. This was the commencement of those refinements of brutality which rendered the reign of Robespierre so execrable; and it is gratifying to find Mirabeau using all his influence to obtain martial law, in order that such scenes might be effectually suppressed. On the 14th, he had proposed this measure, but it

had been rejected; the murder of François caused the Commune to demand it, and after that demand was supported by Mirabeau, and attacked by Robespierre, it was assented to by a large majority. We mention this more particularly, as Mr. Alison, taking up an old error of Lacretelle's, has stated that Mirabeau "vehemently opposed the measure:"* as we possess Mirabeau's speech in favour of it, and there is nothing save Lacretelle's unfounded assertion to support Mr. Alison, the reader will know what to believe. It is rather too bad, that after Mirabeau was denounced to the people by Camille Desmoulins, for having provoked the murder by secret emissaries, *in order to obtain a law for slaughtering the people,* he should be held up to contempt for having leagued with the bloody and the base to keep back that law. On the 27th, the subject of electoral qualifications being discussed, Mirabeau proposed that no one should enjoy political rights who was a bankrupt: not even solvent men who refused to discharge a certain portion of their father's debts. This proposition was very like throwing stones from a glass-house; Mirabeau having been all his life, and being then, more or less insolvent. It was adopted; and on the following day, on the motion of Sièyes that all citizens of the age of twenty-one should be placed upon the list of voters, he proposed a plan of "civic

* Alison, vol. ii. 180.

inscription," whereby all equitable and upright majors were to be enrolled on the list, and all the contrary refused admission; thereby giving rise to a new system of moral punishment, which he showed very powerfully might be exceedingly salutary.

Surrounded by a famishing and poverty-stricken nation, with an empty exchequer, and no immediate signs of a speedy replenishment, the Assembly had for a long time looked with keen and hungry eyes upon the gigantic revenues of the Church, then valued at 300,000,000 of francs annually.* Ever since the last loan of Necker's, ominous hints on this subject had been given out: and the abolition of tithes seemed to lead the way. Barnave, Dupont de Nemours, and Alexandre de Lameth, had stated that it was perfectly lawful to appropriate ecclesiastical possessions—producing precedents in the royal appropriation of the Templar's possessions, and, much recenter, of those of the Jesuits. To escape the impending storm, the Archbishop of Aix proposed to his order to wipe off the deficit, by borrowing 400,000,000 francs on security of the Church lands: but that was silenced by the Assembly; it being argued that the debt, being national, could not honourably be discharged by a moiety of the nation. All the supporters of this disorganized idea of claiming the clerical estates were beating very lamentably

* About 13,000,000*l.*

about the bush; saying and hinting, but doing, daring nothing; when Mirabeau took up the idea, and placed himself at the head of the crusading cohorts: and the presence and generalship of a great man soon manifested itself; for in a week after his taking up the matter, the Church's wealth was national property. Mirabeau received both threats and attempts at conciliation in great numbers: especially of the former; but could neither be seduced by the one, nor daunted by the other. On the 30th, he laid the matter before the Assembly in a long and elaborately argued oration; his brother, the Barrel, having first moved that the motion should be rejected. The opening is, as is usual in Mirabeau's orations, singularly dignified and imposing: it is the trumpet-flourish wherewith an earnest soul announces its advent to the battle.

"When a great nation is assembled, and when it examines a question which interests a large portion of its members—an entire class of society—a class infinitely respectable; when the question appears to embrace, at once, the inviolable rules of property, public worship, political order, and the primary foundations of social order; it is important that we should treat it with a religious caution, discuss it with a scrupulous wisdom, and consider it above all, in order to do away with even the suspicion of error, under the most remote points of view.

"The question concerning the property of the Church is clearly of that number. Already has a number of deputies discussed it with a due solemnity; I am, however, far from conceiving that the subject is exhausted.

"Some have considered the question only as it relates to the *public* interest; but that motive, however great it may be, will not permit us to decree that the estates of the clergy belong to the nation, if we should thereby violate the rights of a large proportion of its members: they have told you that nothing is useful save what is just, and surely we all admit that principle.

"Others have spoken of the influence it would have upon the public credit; of the immense mortgage which it would offer to the creditors of the State; of the confidence which it would resuscitate at a moment when that confidence seems to retire daily farther from our hopes: but beware of imagining such a motive would suffice, if the declaration that is proposed was only destined to sanction an usurpation. True credit is only the result of general confidence, and no confidence could be durable where the violation of a single, but immense property, menaces, by the very fact, all others. *Than save an empire by such means, I had rather, whatsoever be the dangers whereby we are surrounded, confide entirely upon that eternal Providence which watches alike over the people and the king!*"

Having thus attempered the minds of his audience and cooled down the excited spirit raging in the Assembly, he proceeds to discuss, in the most collected and lawyer-like manner, the question in all its bearings. In this oration there is a total absence of that tremendous and overwhelming declamatory fire which is for the most part the individuality of Mirabeau's harangues: on the contrary, all is prudent argument and cool discussion worthy the subject. Those who, deeming the estates of the Church inviolable and sacred, are opposed to the conclusions he arrives at, can hardly read his arguments without some little doubt being given to their preconceived ideas: and such as agree with the principles propounded by him will regard them as the very perfection of rhetorical logic. He answers the objection that the will of the founders should be scrupulously obeyed, by saying, that "Public utility is the supreme law;" and that if the behests of deceased personages are necessary to that utility, the majority of the national governors has a good right to appropriate them, on the same principle, that by levying a tax they appropriate the property of the living. He argues that for a nation to be inconvenienced by the insane legacies of fanatic superstitionists in the feudal ages, is the very height of absurdity. "If every person," he says, "that had ever lived had willed himself a sepulchre, there

would have been a need for overturning such barren monuments, to find lands to till; and for removing the ashes of the dead to provide food for the living." He then goes on to divide all foundations into three classes: those established by the kings, those by public bodies, and those by private individuals. Those founded by the kings are national property, he contends, because the king is, and ever was, not the disposer of individual fortune, but the dispenser of the nation's power and bounty; and they never were given like the fiefs granted to the nobility, but bestowed simply as a provision for public worship: *ergo*, if the State finds it can maintain public worship in a more economical and convenient manner, it has the manifest right to resume these royal grants. Those founded by public bodies are the indubitable property of the nation, he asserts: but candour compels us to add, that he by no means proves this assertion to be indubitable. He slurs over the question; and the portion wherein he treats that important topic is at once the briefest and lamest in the whole speech. On the subject of individual founders, he speaks at much more length, and with almost unanswerable argument: either, he says, the clergy are the heirs of those individual founders, or else the nation is. If the clergy be, then clearly have they the right to will and appropriate their hereditary property; which they them-

selves acknowledge they have not: in that case, the nation is the heir, and has that right. The clergy, he emphatically asserts, are not possessors, but stewards: they have not even the usufruct; and he says,—

"Seamen never appropriated to themselves the vessels which the nation built to defend the State; never, according to our existing customs, will an army part among its soldiers the territories it has conquered. Shall, then, the clergy alone be permitted to say, that the victories achieved by its piety over that of the faithful are to belong to it, and remain inviolable, instead of constituting a portion of the indivisible domain of the State?

"Is it consistent with the new order of things which we have been establishing, that the Government,—the distributor of all ecclesiastical riches,—by the nominating of the dignitaries, should thereby preserve infinite means of action, of corruption, of influence? And for the interest of religion and public morals,—those two benefactresses of the human race,—is it not important that a more equal distribution of the riches of the Church, should henceforth oppose itself to the luxury of those who are the stewards of the wealth of the poor—to the licentiousness of those whom religion and society present unto the people as an everlasting living example of purity of morals?"

He concluded by proposing, as a guarantee of the good intentions of the State, that the stipend of even country curés should be fixed at a minimum of 1200 francs.* When the reader calls to mind the thoroughly rotten state of the church in France in those days — how de Brienne had 30,000*l.* per annum, was an atheist, kept harlots, and lived in sumptuous pomp, while few of the village curés reached Mirabeau's minimum of 50*l.*—he cannot but acknowledge that the intent and theory, at the least, were most laudable. It is to be regretted that Mirabeau, in his zeal, never reflected that, though he could guarantee his own sincerity in proposing the appropriation of the clerical funds, not for secular purposes but for equalization, he could not answer for that of the Assembly: that it was easy to get a nation to seize immense properties, but not so easy to induce it to repay them. On the 2nd of November, the subject was again discussed, Mirabeau submitting the form of the decree; which was twofold—1st, That the ecclesiastical revenues were State property, on condition that the State undertook to provide the necessary officers, &c. for public worship. 2nd, That in such a provision none were to have less than 1200 francs per annum, exclusive of house, glebe, &c. He had prepared another very powerful oration of about fifty pages in length; which, owing to

* 50*l.*

the anxiety of the Assembly, he refrained from pronouncing, although he obtained hearing in order to do so. It was, however, printed, but is immeasurably inferior, in every respect to the former one; being little other than a reply to the Abbé Maury, who had opposed the motion with his usual violence and subtlety. The Assembly divided, and the numbers were

For the motion	568
Against it	346
Majority in favour . . .	222

On the 6th of November, he spoke largely on the subject of finance; attacking his ancient enemy the Bank of Discount, and urging upon the Assembly to immediately establish a National Bank of France. But suddenly branching off from the subject, he discoursed vehemently upon the advisability of ministers being deputies: or at any rate having seats in the Assembly; with a view to being ere long a minister himself, and seeing that, deprived of the tribune, half his power would be gone. But jealousy and faction were rife in the land; leagued firmly together to keep from the king the only man who had the power and the earnest unselfish wish to save him: the court-cabal did not want to be saved by the Leviathan of the Revolution; the Robespierre hell-cabal did not want the fast extending power of anarchy to be clipped;

and so these two, banded together, met his motion with howls of execration; until Mirabeau had to rise in indignant scorn, and tell them—not from fear of *his* ascendancy to ruin France, but if they would keep him from the ministry—not to decree that *no* deputy could be in office, but that no deputy named Riqueti de Mirabeau! But it was all in vain: "Mit der Dummheit:" against stupidity the very gods fight unvictorious. And on the 7th, the Assembly decreed their ruinous and ridiculous decree. Mirabeau took no pains to conceal his sentiments on this decision, either in public or private. "Atrocious," "beastly," "insane," and similar expressions, are the epithets wherewith he plentifully bespatters the decree and decreers. The secret of Mirabeau's anxiety to combat this baneful motion is, that about that time had commenced the first of the long series of flirtations with the court, which lasted till his death: never, in reality, coming to that complete alliance so generally supposed. The court behaved, as a coy maiden, who smiles on one she fain would win; and then when he steps forward, heart-inflamed, unto her, suddenly draws back coldly, and so leads him on an ignis-fatuus dance, until, perchance, he grows disgusted and turns away. Monsieur asked and obtained from Mirabeau his ideas as to the danger of royalty: in which Mirabeau advised the king to cast aside his Austrian-miscounsellors, and

assume a thorough-going patriotic line of action, so as to win that confidence of the nation in his approbation of the Revolution which he was then far from possessing. Such advice could not have been palatable at that time at all, and it is no wonder that no farther communication ensued for the time being. At this period all his letters to Major Mauvillion, are overflowing with the most tender concern for France, thus sailing onward to the Niagara-gulf of anarchy: for royalty, so stupidly ruining itself, but refusing to see who were *men*, and who were pedantic impostors —sham men merely.*

On the 14th of November, the Assembly discussed the project of dividing France into eighty departments, instead of the old provinces; which Mirabeau warmly supported, though he quarrelled with several details. He wished the number to be one hundred and twenty, thereby causing many towns, that, if there were but eighty, would be second or third in the department, to be chief towns. These he had proposed in committee; but, being defeated there, had reproduced them on the report being submitted to the Assembly. Several of his suggestions were adopted in the following January, when the division was finally arranged. On the 20th he opposed a plan of Necker's, for constituting the Bank of Discount the National Bank. Every day, more or less,

* *Vide* Lettres à Mauvillion, p. 408 to 508.

Mirabeau's name appears both in the morning and evening debates; but mostly on matters uninteresting at the present day: technical details, and formalities. To cite these, nay, even to mention them, would be tedious alike to author and reader; and we shall, therefore, confine ourselves solely to such matters as are of historical importance, or interesting from other reasons.

On the 8th of December, the Assembly was engaged in the discussion of the mode of constituting the municipalities; and Mirabeau, on the 10th, introduced, *apropos* of this, a very laudable design for progression of offices: to the effect that no man could rise to the higher employments, who had not qualified himself for election thereto by first occupying the subordinate ones. By so doing, he conceived that an advisable delay would be caused in a man's political career; so that no rash young man would find himself in the National Assembly before experience had been duly added to talent. Moreover, it would render many insignificant and otherwise despicable situations more honourable, by constituting them necessities. This proposition was most fiercely attacked by Barnave; but as Mirabeau had to leave the debate, to sit upon a committee, he could not reply, and the subject was adjourned to the 15th. On that date Mirabeau's motion was the order of the day; and, after having been attacked

by the viscount (whose rule of political life was to confront his brother) and by Duport, Mirabeau briefly defended it; and then the Assembly adjourned the motion indefinitely,—a kind of "this day six months."

We have before stated how Geneva was governed by a minority, aided by French influence; and that the best citizens had been ejected by the dominant faction. That faction fearing, we suppose, that the Assembly might reinstate the popular party, and so being anxious to conciliate it, early in December offered a gift of 900,000 livres to the French government, in a letter to Necker; wherein, as excuse for the sum not being larger, there was a vivid description of the penury and sufferings of the Genevese. This, on the 18th of December, Necker submitted to the Assembly, and on the 28th M. de Volney proposed that the gift should be rejected: but it was reserved for Mirabeau to express the sentiments of the Assembly in one of his most splendid efforts. After showing that the loan was not the loan of the Genevese people, but of an unpopular and tyrannous government—to whose interest alone it was that the guarantee of France should be maintained—he turned to the famine in Geneva, and delivered himself of this most splendid paragraph:—

"And at what period is this gift offered to you?

Precisely at the same time when that guarantee is obtained; as though it were the price and remuneration for that guarantee. These suspicions are confirmed, when we discover, from the very letter of the donors, that far from being the overplus of abundance, this gift is extorted from indigence and from want. Singular generosity! What? The citizens of Geneva behold around them a people, bound unto them by the strongest relations, by the ties of blood, by social and national affections: they are spectators of their misery, they themselves draw a sorrowful picture thereof; and at a time when their beneficence can and ought to be exercised upon their own brethren, they prefer scattering it elsewhere; forwarding it afar off: preceded by the blatant trumpet of boastful pride, they offer us a magnificent gem-present in the setting of misery! They forget that our delicacy would lead us rather to give relief to them; and that, at the very least, we might say, 'Arouse the drooping arts, support your manufactories, spread plenty in your own laps, ere you dream of offering us donations, which humanity will not permit us to accept, unless upon the condition of showering them back with usury upon the starving wretches of your own country.'"

The most unanimous thunders of applause burst from every quarter of the Assembly, and amid renewed plaudits, Mirabeau submitted a form of

refusal; which, after the Abbé Maury (a somewhat remarkable thing) had warmly seconded, was passed *nemine dissentiente.*

Thus, strong in Herculean body and gigantic intellect, daring heart and unbending genius, swaying the destinies of France, and, as it happened, of the world, in his hands; with the resounding cheers of the nation ringing in his ears, did 1789 fade out from Mirabeau and 1790 come in: the last complete year he was ever to go through here. Oh! if, as we are told, no man knoweth what a day may bring forth; what shall we say of a year?

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE TERRITORIAL DIVISION — LIBERTY OF THE PRESS—THE ABBE MAURY—THE MURDER OF FAVRAS—GREAT EFFUSION ON THE TERM OF THE ASSEMBLY—ORATIONS ON THE RIGHT OF DECLARING WAR.

From the commencement of 1790 *to May* 24*th.*

THE year 1790 opened with debates of a feudal and territorial character, in which Mirabeau took his usual prominent position. As we informed the reader in the first chapter of this volume, France was in reality a number of small kingdoms, each possessing more or less distinct privileges, united under one monarchic head. This the division into departments entirely abolished; and, accordingly, various provinces resuscitated musty charter-rights of the middle ages, and, standing with stupid pertinacity upon these, protested against the departmental partition. The Assembly, under the able guidance of Mirabeau,

refused to listen to these discontented and most insanely factious complaints, and passed weighty censure on a few individual offenders (Jan. 11th). About the same period he also prepared a speech upon the unrestrained freedom of the press; taking especial cognizance of the infamous publications then daily increasing, and which instilled the most vicious principles into the minds of the rabble. Mallet du Pan's paper, the *Mercury of France*—the organ of the ultra-royalist or emigrant party, and the unblushing and unscrupulous defamer of the Revolution (which God knows wanted no defamation, the truth being quite enough!)—was also especially noticed in this production; which, however, was never delivered.

On the 22nd of January, the grand magnanimity of Mirabeau's noble and generous disposition shone forth in a striking manner; as did also his power of swaying the Assembly. Cazalès proposed that a full history of the national debt should be laid before the Assembly; and the Abbé Maury, in defending that proposal, gave way to such a transport of ungoverned passion, as to make use of language so insulting, that, in the midst of fierce yells, and all the noises of excited frenzy, a motion was made for his expulsion from the Assembly. The cheers, loud and resounding, which greeted this motion proved the feelings of the Assembly on the subject. Maury was

Mirabeau's personal and unflinchingly virulent opponent; and now, when one word from him would have infallibly insured Maury's expulsion, he rose and opposed the motion. He might have crushed his chief antagonist into nothing: extinguished him, without any stain having remained upon his character therefrom; but his generosity of temperament would not allow him to strike a defenceless enemy. Amidst a storm of angry cries for expulsion, he demanded leave to speak: but M. Montlausier opposed that demand, informing the Assembly that Mirabeau was about to say something very violent and unadvised. Mirabeau, however, obtained a hearing, and in a short but convincing speech, showed the injustice of expulsion; and ended by saying, "I recommend, therefore, that the Abbé Maury be censured, and that that censure be recorded on the journals. And now, sir," he added, addressing M. Montlausier, "Should you have guessed that such would be my conclusion?" Strange to say, the passions of the Assembly cooled down before his reasoning, and his motion was adopted.

On the 17th of February, the unfortunate Favras fell a victim to the constantly-recurring plotlets of the court; which every week brought to light. He was accused of having plotted to effect a counter-revolution, and was executed therefor; resolutely refusing to disclose anything: although it was generally

supposed his evidence could have implicated Monsieur, the king's brother. Monsieur was only saved from sinking under the popular hatred, by adopting the spirited plan recommended to him by Mirabeau; of showing himself to the people, and declaring in plain, unmistakeable terms his full and complete adherence to the Revolution. On the 20th, Cazalès, with the probable design of extorting a kind of revenge for the death of Favras, proposed that the king should have *unlimited* executive power for three months! A most reasonable proposition truly; and which Mirabeau attacked with all his force: telling the Assembly that they had passed a martial law, perfectly adequate to restrain popular license, provided they did not fall into timidity, and neglect supporting the municipal officers; and, having supported them, refrain from declaring them perfectly responsible for the peace of their respective towns. The Assembly foolishly took the third worst part of all: they adopted the *laissez-faire* policy, and did not strengthen the municipal officers at all; neither granted the king any increased power.

On the 26th, Mirabeau's design of rendering France English in its constitution was again visible. He very strongly advocated the ministerial submission of an annual budget to the Assembly: but with small success.

In the month of March, his name appears inces-

santly; but never upon any topic of sufficient importance to demand a detailed notice.

On the 13th of April, Mirabeau pronounced one of the most splendid and widely-circulated of all his extemporaneous effusions. It was on the motion of the fanatic Carthusian, Dom Gerle, that the Catholic dogma should be declared the national religion. Mirabeau opposed this; and in the course of that opposition, in reference to several appeals to history made by the *coté droit* in the debate, delivered this magnificent apostrophe:—

"Since historic citations are permitted in the matter which now occupies us, I myself will just make one;—recall to mind that from hence—from this very tribune where I am speaking—I behold the window of the palace, wherein the factious, uniting temporal interests to the most sacred interests of religion, sent forth from the hand of a king of the French, the fatal shot which was the signal for the massacre of St. Bartholomew!"

On the 19th, the Assembly was engaged in discussing the advisability of setting aside the period assigned to them in their summons, which was fast drawing to a close: being for twelve months; and on this occasion Mirabeau achieved a brilliant oratoric triumph. Anxious to remove the hated Assembly, the whole strength of the court-faction advocated the cessation of the Assembly on the com-

pletion of its year; and basing their arguments upon their writs, and the prescribed term of the functions of the deputies, were clearly in the ascendant; because their opponents endeavoured to refute their arguments, also by the strict letter of the law, and—that being decidedly in favour of the twelvemonth's duration—failed of course to do so. There are periods, however, when the strict letter of the law is a mere bugbear: and so was it in this case. They could not transact what they had to transact by any law-letter, because the whole revolution was unprecedented, unexpected, and had not got its statutes drawn up as then. This Mirabeau saw clearly, and while others had been prating most barrenly on parchment-titles, and other dreary lawyerisms, he mounted the tribune, and threw out a genuine ray of verdant freshness into the waste of pedantic aridity.

"The efforts of despotism, the perils we have overcome, the violence we have suppressed—these are our titles: our success has consecrated them; the adhesion of all parts of the empire, oft-repeated, has legitimatized them: has sanctioned them.

"Let those who have preferred the strange reproach against us, of having used new words to express new sentiments and principles, new ideas and institutions, now seek, in the paltry vocabulary of the publicists, the definition of these words—*National Convention!* Called into being by the invincible

tocsin of necessity, our National Convention is above all imitation, as above all authority; it owes no account but to itself alone, and can only be judged by posterity!

"Gentlemen, you all know the anecdote of that Roman who, to save his country from a mighty conspiracy, had been constrained to exceed the power conferred upon him by the laws. A captious tribune asked him to take oath that he had respected these powers. He desired, by that insidious question, to place the consul in the alternative of committing perjury or making an embarrassing avowal; "*I swear,*" cried the illustrious man, "*I swear that I have saved my country!*" Gentlemen, I swear that you have saved France!"

These words, rolled forth in deep musical bass notes from the broad chest of Mirabeau, reverberated from the tribune roofwards, and echoed into the hearts of every man as a message from the inexhaustible region of truth. *In an instant,* Ferrières tells us, the discussion was closed; and the Assembly declared itself permanent until the completion of the Constitution.

We may as well here remark, that about this period began those inconstant and mysterious flirtations between the king and Mirabeau, which have given rise to so many false reports and strange contradictions. These, for obvious reasons, will be given

later on, connectedly, in a chapter exclusively devoted to his liaison with the court; but, that the reader may form no false inferences, let us state that it was not until the commencement of 1791 that there was any really settled understanding between the parties: nay, strictly speaking, not even then.

Ever since its commencement, Pitt and England had been regarded as the bitterest enemies of the Revolution; and the rupture between Spain and England having caused the latter to prepare for hostilities, her gathering armaments excited the fears of the French king's minister of war. The king issued orders for preparations at Brest, and elsewhere, to meet any attack; and then submitted a demand to the Assembly for the necessary subsidies. This caused great discontent in the Assembly, and the elder Lameth asked them to decide whether the king or the nation had the right of declaring war or peace; stating, truly, that the king's demand involved that question. This was on the 14th of May; on the 15th, Mirabeau prevailed upon them to propose a vote of thanks to the king for his precautionary measures, and then to proceed at once to the discussion of that most important topic.

This discussion immediately ensued, and continued uninterrupted for several successive days. As usual, the Assembly was divided into two extremes: the right advocating, with their usual heat and *hauteur*,

under the generalship of Cazalès and Maury, that the exclusive right should be vested in the king solely and arbitrarily; the left, equally excited, demanding that that right should be vested entirely in the legislative body. Thus were the two poles battling; until, on the 20th, Mirabeau appeared, for the first time, in the debate. He, fettered to no idealic theory—were it republican, or were it of the ancien régime—had examined the case unprejudicedly; and so astonished all France by proposing as an amendment, that the Assembly should decree, "that the power of waging war or making peace belongs to the nation, which delegates that power to its head, the king. That the king could therefore declare war, but must ask the Assembly for the funds for carrying on the same; stating, at the same time, the reasons for declaring war, and the ultimate object thereof." This was obviously the truest and most moderate proposition; and we may therein discover once again how thoroughly imbued was the great French statesman with our English system.

This oration is beyond all doubt the most wonderful and important of all his efforts: wonderful for its consummate boldness, for it was a direct confronting of the popular faction; and no less so for the intellectual vigour and political shrewdness abounding in its every sentence. Occupying eighty octavo pages, it is at once far too lengthy for complete in-

sertion; and the peculiarities of Mirabeau's cogent and close reasoning render it exceedingly difficult to make an analysis. Nevertheless, as no life of him could possibly be complete wherein this oration had not a prominent place, we must attempt the latter.

As was his wont, he opens by endeavouring to allay the excitement of the Assembly; urging warmly a calm, reflective consideration. Then he goes on to state the case: That there are two extremes before them; both equally dangerous; both equally hostile to his individual opinions: that, however, he by no means thought it was incumbent upon them to adopt either extreme; accordingly he would endeavour to demonstrate how a much wiser medium might be resolved upon. He then plunges into all the intricacies of piercing argument. Before his ruthless onslaught, the arguments of Lameth and the ultras of their school fall, beyond any hope of resuscitation. It is almost laughable to see how utterly incontrovertible and lucidly conclusive are these demolitions of his opponent's positions. The Assembly has the right of making war? he asks. Very well, then, let us see. The king has the sole power of maintaining foreign diplomatic relations: this you cannot deny, without rendering the king positively useless as an executive. If, then, a foreign nation insults our flag, must our honour be tampered with until the ambassador receives his instructions from you: which

instructions might have to wait during a week's debate? No: the ambassador would leave the country instanter, and thus a tacit war would be commenced ere even the king was aware of it. Thus you see the only power you could decree yourselves, would be that of continuing or arresting the progress of a war. But how is that to be done? By submitting everything to the Assembly. "Will ye force the executive power to notify its least preparatives, its most diminutive steps? You will thus violate all the rules of prudence: the enemy knowing all your precautions, all your measures, will laugh at them: you will render the preparatives useless." No: it is plain that the power of both declaring and prosecuting a war must be vested in the responsible executive. But then, again, are there not numerous dangers from rendering the king's war-power too arbitrary? Undoubtedly: but these could all be guarded against by retaining the liberty of refusing the supplies; by the power of impeaching the ministry causing the war, who should be punished as high-traitors, if found guilty; by preserving the right to demand the executive to make peace, whenever a majority of the Assembly is opposed to the continuance of the war. An executive thus responsible would be far more chary about plunging into hostilities, than an Assembly; which, responsible to nobody, might be urged, in times of excite-

ment, to the maddest measures, by a favourite orator's seducing or inflammatory power.

He then proceeds, after having thus laid down the great principles, to enter minutely and extendedly into the most intricate details, into a maze of elaborate and connected arguments, all demonstrating that the chief beauty of a limited monarchal government was the pure liberty enjoyed thereunder; owing to the just equipoise between arbitrary rule and demagoguic confusion. After having occupied the tribune more than two hours, he proposed a string of resolutions; the substance whereof has been already given. The speech was received with complete attention and much applause throughout.

Thus much for a concise analysis, giving a most incomplete idea of this remarkable harangue. We must not, however, omit a little scene which occurred near its conclusion. Speaking of his proposition that the Assembly should possess power of disbanding the surplus army immediately peace was declared, and also considering the general tenor of his proposals, he was shewing that to give the king the utmost constitutional power, and to hold sway over the army at the same time, were the only means for ensuring the state against a military king leading his victorious army against the existing laws of the country, and establishing his own system

there instead. After drawing a striking picture of such a rebel king, he cried in enthusiastic anger,—

"Annihilate ambition! let the king have nothing to sigh for, but that which the law can afford him; render his magistracy what it ought to be, and entertain, then, no further apprehensions that a royal renegade, abdicating his throne, will run the chance of hastening from a victory to the block!"

At this point, loud cries of disapprobation burst forth from several members; and, in the midst thereof, D'Espréménil (who, since his factious conduct in the Paris parliament, had drifted round into a very ultra and uncommonly zealous courtite) arose, and demanded that Mirabeau should be called to order, as the king's person had been declared inviolable. Mirabeau immediately replied,—

"I shall be careful how I answer the charge of disloyalty thus brought against me. You have all heard the extreme case I was supposing; that of an arbitrary and despotic monarch who, having revolted against his people, returns home with an army of Frenchmen, to repossess himself of the citadels of tyranny:—now, a king so situated is a king no longer!"

Reiterated applauses shook the hall, and he concluded his harangue uninterrupted, save by plaudits.

On the 21st, Barnave replied at length to Mirabeau: but unsuccessfully; and on the motion of

Cazalès, seconded by Mirabeau, the debate was adjourned to the day following, when Mirabeau was to answer Barnave. In the mean time, every step was taken to intimidate Mirabeau; or, in case that did not succeed, to ruin him in popular opinion. All over Paris, all over France we may say, he was held up to the contempt and hatred of the people, as one determined to restore despotism in its most hateful phases. No libel so audacious but it found at once ready affirmation, and as ready credence: for in those times the people imagined that any law giving the slightest shadow of power to the monarch, militated against the liberty of the nation. An infamous pamphlet was publicly distributed in the streets of Paris, and the hoarse voices of the hawkers were heard crying in all the streets, "THE EXPOSURE OF THE GREAT TREASON OF THE COUNT OF MIRABEAU;" of the execrable character whereof, this extract will alone give sufficient evidence.

"Have a care lest the people promenade thy head, as they have carried that of Foulon; whose mouth was filled with grass. This people is slow to be irritated, but it is terrible when the day of its vengeance arrives: inexorable, cruel is this people; through the magnitude of perfidies, the hopes they have been made to conceive, the homages they have rendered."

This revolting pamphlet was the work of a young

man, named Lacroix, who had been induced to compose it, by Alexandre de Lameth, Barnave, and others of the anarchist faction; at whose expense, chiefly, six thousand copies had been given away to the populace. Added to all this, mob-orators went about all the streets, taverns, and clubs of the lower order, denouncing Mirabeau as a traitor.

The result of all this was, that a tree was marked whereon the populace decided upon hanging Mirabeau; and on the 22nd, the day of debate, as Lameth himself tells us, "more than fifty thousand citizens" occupied all the avenues leading to the Salle de Manège; giving most ominous hints as to Mirabeau's probable destination after the debate: that being the *lanterne!* In this appalling juncture, Mirabeau's fund of indomitable daring does not desert him: he rises as usual to the height of circumstances: rises indeed to the very sublime of courage. He did not, with cowardly effrontery, go over to his opponents: as has been done by men in our own country, whom history delights to honour more than such as Mirabeau; nor did he adopt the easier method of feigned illness, and consequent absence. On the morning of debate, he rode down to the hall through the crowds of infuriated people; and when timorous friends clung round him, urging upon his notice the personal danger he was undergoing, he said, "I know it well enough: I must

come hence to-day triumphant or piecemeal!" For three-quarters of an hour, with the most impenetrably cool *hauteur*, he stood, arms crossed, in the tribune, waiting until it might please his bellowing opponents to hear him; and then spoke thus:—

"It is something, without doubt, towards reconciling oppositions, to state clearly upon what they agree, and upon what they differ. Amicable discussions are far more adapted to the establishment of a right understanding, than are calumnious insinuations, insane accusations, the hatreds of rivalry, the machinations of intrigue and malevolence. It has been reported, for eight days now, that the portion of this Assembly that advocates the concurrence of the royal will in the exercise of the right of peace and war, are parricides of the public liberty: rumours of perfidy, of corruption, have been disseminated; popular vengeance for the sustenance of the tyranny of opinions has been invoked. It would appear that there cannot, without crime, be two opinions upon one of the most delicate and difficult questions of the social organization. O! what a strange mania! What a deplorable blindness is this which thus influences, the one against the other, men whom one same object, one same indestructible sentiment should always reconcile, always unite, even in the midst of the most violent debates: men who thus substitute the irascibility of self-love for the worship of our country, and deliver up one another to popular vengeance!

"Myself, for instance; but a few days agone, and they would have carried me in triumph; and now, behold! they are crying in the streets, THE GREAT TREASON OF THE COUNT OF MIRABEAU. I did not need that lesson to know that there is small space from the Capitol to the Tarpeian rock: but the man who combats for reason, for his country, does not so easily hold himself conquered. He who is conscious of having merited well from his country, and, above all, that he can yet be useful to her; he who lives not on a vain celebrity, and who disdains the success of a day for true glory; he who would speak, who would act for the general good, independent of the fickle movements of popular opinion; that man carries within himself the recompense of all his services, the solace of his pains, the reward of his dangers: he should await his harvest, his destiny—the only one that interests him, the destiny of his name—from time alone; that incorruptible judge who does justice unto all!"

True, O thou gold-speaking Mirabeau: and Time shall do justice unto thee!

"Let those who, for eight days, have been prophesying my opinion without knowing it; who even now calumniate my speech without comprehending it; who accuse me of offering incense to impotent idols at a moment when they are overthrown, or of being the vile stipendiary of one I have never ceased

to combat; who denounce as an enemy of the Revolution him who perhaps has not been useless to it, and who, even were that Revolution unconnected with his glory, could therein alone find safety: let those deliver up to the fury of a deluded populace the very man who for twenty years has combated oppressors; who spoke to Frenchmen of Liberty, of the Constitution, of Resistance, while his vile calumniators sucked the milk of the courts, and lived under all the dominant prejudices. What matters it to me? This cowardly back-blow will not impede me in my career. I will say to them, Answer, if you can: then calumniate as much as you may please!"

After this sublime opening, he commenced replying to all Barnave's objections one by one; which he performed so successfully, that when that gentleman ascended the tribune to reply, he found himself totally unable to do so, and, after a few very lame remarks, retired, while the Assembly adopted Mirabeau's plans by a large majority. He was perfectly correct in his remark: there could be no middle ending to the question. Triumph or death were the two inevitable results; for had the Assembly not shared the odium of the measure by adopting it, he must have fallen a victim. All, therefore, depended on his own powers: these did not betray him in his need, and the end was triumph!

CHAPTER VIII.

MIRABEAU ON THE SLAVE-TRADE.

1790.

WITH that dogged and imperturbably complacent feeling of national perfection, which has won for us the cordial dislike of all continental nations, more or less, and caused the cynical but well-deserved sarcasm so current abroad, of "Christ died for the British nation," it never enters into the mind of a genuine Englishman, that any other than his own countrymen could have suggested, or taken share in, the many great discoveries or reforms celebrated in the history of the world. To associate the name of any foreigner with those of Wilberforce or Clarkson in the abolition of slavery, would be treated as simply ridiculous; unworthy, perhaps, the labour of denial. Least of all, in selecting a foreigner to share the honour with these, would Mirabeau be fixed upon. So very little, until after long years of misrepresentation and falsehood, does the world know of its great men.

That Wilberforce and Clarkson survived to behold their darling measure carried, was their good fortune, not merit; that Mirabeau was rapt away suddenly ere *his* scheme had been propounded to the legislation of his country, was his misfortune, and should not detract from the high praise every lover of humanity must award him: that his scheme was not propounded before his death, was owing in reality to the paltry system of international diplomacy then in vogue: as we are about to see. And beyond all this, in placing the name of Mirabeau with the other twain, we must urge with emphasis the glaring difference of external situation between them and Mirabeau. Wilberforce, of easy means, calm, pellucid life-lot, political and private, had no other occupation, no other business, than for twenty years to advocate his humane measure; with Clarkson also, it was the unique idea of his life, and no other great measure absorbed his abilities and attention. With Mirabeau how different! embarrassed in his circumstances; occupied in his time; morning and evening in the Assembly delivering orations which for long ages shall dazzle the admirers of human eloquence; making, we may say, the constitution of his country almost himself; confronting at once absolute tyranny and lawless anarchy: surely, if, amid all this, he had only devoted an hour's efforts to the cause of the negroes, he might be entitled to the place we claim for him. That from the vast abyss of oratorical declamation, and private, headlong intrigue and

dissipation: nay, at the very moment when, in addition to his already superhuman labours, he was just adding the last Hercules labour of saving the monarchy; that, in such a whirlpool of confusion, his great heart should have found time to consider the awful condition of the sable sons of the south, and to consecrate to their cause the mighty magic of his genius, is a thing unknown almost to our English reading world: a thing which, known, adds one more splendid jewel to his already gem-brilliant diadem. Neither was this topic forced upon Mirabeau, by being a matter of probable discussion just then: he undertook it from an entirely spontaneous sympathy, unsolicited by any; and with him alone was to have rested the onus of introducing it to the Assembly. So important to the right understanding of Mirabeau's character do we deem these labours of his on the slave question, that, although never brought prominently forward by him, we are devoting to their exclusive consideration, the present chapter.

The subject was first brought under his notice at the opening of the States-General in 1789, when it became a question whether the French colonies should send representatives thereunto. On the 8th of June in that year, when a batch of deputies arrived from St. Domingo, and it was a matter of discussion whether they should be allowed to take their seats, Mirabeau opposed their admission, on the ground that they did not represent St. Domingo; since not one of the coloured inhabitants, not even

those who were proprietors and free, had been allowed to vote. On the Declaration of the Rights of Man, in August, La Rochefoucauld, and one or two others, had demanded the abolition of the slave-trade; but in such an insipid manner as to excite no attention. Since then, however, the subject had been largely discussed in France, and a society of the "Friends of the Blacks" formed: in fact, it began to be feared by interested parties, that if the matter were taken up by some great leader, it would be carried. In order to take steps in time, a deputation of the "Armed Citizens of Bordeaux" demanded, on the 25th of February, 1790, the maintenance of the traffic as an essential to national prosperity. On this occasion, Mirabeau attacked their demand so forcibly in the *Courier de Provence*, as to draw upon him the earnest prayer of "A Citizen of Rochelle," that he would refrain from urging his opinions from the tribune.* That he did so refrain, was not from any doubts as to his duty, or any attention he accorded to the prayer of the "Citizen," but because he saw that it was useless to do so at that moment; since, on the 8th of March, the Assembly declared itself opposed to all innovation as regarded the colonies. He, therefore, had to gain one or two preparatory points, before proceeding to throw the weight of his eloquence and influence upon that question. The stupid jealousy which retarded the abolition so long in England,

* *Courier de Provence*, No. xxx., and *Moniteur*, No. cvii.

was as rampant in France; the only argument advanced against the abolition, being, that of England and other nations reaping the advantage of their discontinuing the traffic.

> If we do not buy the poor creatures, they will;
> And tortures and groans will be multiplied still.

It was to provide himself, if possible, with an overwhelming argument against this mercantile selfishness, that Mirabeau, about April 1790, addressed the following letter to Mr. Wilberforce.

To M. Wilberforce.

"I had formed for a long time, Monsieur, the design of addressing myself to you, with the confidence which two sincere friends of liberty owe each other; but an accident having temporarily deprived me of the power of using my own eyes and writing myself, I have been compelled to postpone from day to day the overture to which the immense services you have rendered to the cause of the negroes have encouraged me to make; now, however, my recovery still delaying a little, the session of the English Parliament arriving, and our own circumstances causing me to take the resolution of introducing earlier than I had intended the great question of the abolition of the slave-trade, I have decided upon addressing to you a few lines in a strange hand, reserving ulterior explanations to a manner of correspondence more free and off-hand (*plus abandonnée*).

"I know the resistance, and even the machina-

tions, which the rage of the planters will excite against my motion, and against myself individually; I know also that I shall incur the blame of many honest men in whom the deceptions of interest blind humanity; but I know, beyond that, the distinction your idol, Cicero, makes on this subject: and further, I have but one fear, one solely, for the success of our cause, and that is, the influence of that deplorable argument—*if we abolish the slave-trade, the English will profit thereby.*

"In vain shall I tell them that, did I partake in those prejudices between nation and nation which have caused the invention of the odious expression, *natural enemies,* I could not desire for England a privilege more fatally exclusive than that of the traffic in negroes: in vain shall I demonstrate to them that the system of reciprocity is an absurd system on the face of it, because, according to the principle thereof, no one should trade save with himself; in vain shall I prove that the abolition of the slave-trade is not a measure of choice, but that it becomes inevitably necessary for the one of the two nations, which shall permit itself to be left from giving the example, as soon as the decree is adopted by its neighbour.

"Unhappily, enlightenment has not yet sufficiently advanced to allow an universal prejudice to be combated by the unaided force of reason; and of the well-intentioned voices of the Assembly, I shall lose the greater portion, if I be not able to persuade

them that England will infallibly imitate our example: or rather concur in the execution of our law, the day when we abolish that infamous practice.

"It gives me pleasure to believe, Monsieur, that a man such as M. Pitt, sees in so great a question something more than a mere parliamentary evolution; and that, if the party which is opposed to him has thought to embarrass him, by compromising his popularity either with the enemies of liberty or with the slave-traders of Bristol, of Liverpool, &c. &c., it is impossible for him not to consider among the first citizens of his country, him who, at a period when other men gave hardly any hope, has felt that he could not for a moment balance between the temporary clamours of commerce, and the imperishable glory of having closed the greatest and the most shameful of the plagues which afflict humanity: of having carried one of the revolutions which shall the most promptly ameliorate the destiny of the human race.

"But, Monsieur, every body has not the same confidence in that opinion of M. Pitt relative to the abolition of the trade; more particularly as the planters have spread, with an infernal activity, the too well-credited report that the English minister has outwitted his adversary, by protecting without the demands of African commerce, while within he showed himself ostensibly the friend of the blacks.

"It is extremely important to me that I should destroy this report; and my zeal, although directed

to the cause itself, can never be entirely indifferent to the glory of M. Pitt. We have, without doubt, both of us caution to maintain; for the day so desirable (and for a few who wish its advent, so near) has not yet arrived, when the principal minister of England and a member of the French legislature, animated by the same views, and nearly defenders of the same interests, can correspond together without human respect imposing reserve to their philanthropy: but can we not, Monsieur—you being our organ—give ourselves mutual gages of confidence and good faith? You are the friend of M. Pitt, and that is not one of the least rewards of his life. I have not the honour of knowing you personally, but you are, if I may so speak, the father of the revolution I would accomplish in France relative to the African commerce. The indefatigable constancy of your labours, the efforts and the sacrifices which your inexhaustible feeling has lavished on this cause, are the guarantees of your sentiments and of your principles; in which it is impossible to refuse every confidence, unless you also refuse belief in virtue. I believe in virtue, Monsieur, and I believe, beyond everything, in yours!

"I hope that a man who can have no interest in this beyond the mere good in which he would fain be the useful co-operator, and who for so many years has been known at least by his passion for liberty, by his perseverance in opposition to oppressors; I hope, I say, that that man in his turn will inspire

you with some confidence. All he asks is, that you should be useful to the pious end which seems your first ambition. Deign to concoct with M. Pitt some assurance you may be able to give me, not for myself, but for my allies; and to tell me to what extent I may use it. I shall be punctilious, even religious, in the observation of whatever shall be prescribed me.

"I offer, also, Monsieur, to submit to you the project of the law that I calculate on proposing to the National Assembly. Independent of the observations your experience and wisdom could enrich me with, you will find me ready to adapt my plan to your localities, whether in the New World or in Africa, in order to make a law corresponding perfectly with yours. To conclude, there is nothing which the beneficent Wilberforce has not a right to expect from my deference, from my zeal, and from the respect wherewith I remain, yours, &c.,

THE COUNT OF MIRABEAU."

Any praise of ours given to this truly beautiful letter would indeed be "gilding refined gold:" to compare it, whether as a model of subdued epistolary eloquence, or as the expression of enlightened and honourable sentiments, with the imbecile and even silly correspondence teeming throughout the numerous volumes of Wilberforce's life by his sons, cannot fail in producing a verdict highly favourable to the Frenchman. There is a body, a solidity, in the

substance of that letter, which we shall search long ere we discover elsewhere. The only thing we have to regret is, that it met with no response. That a Mirabeau, in an admiring half-timid love and wonder, should address himself to a Wilberforce, and that a Wilberforce should withhold reply, is one of the most singular incongruities of those times. The sons of Wilberforce slip over this very glibly; simply stating the application for the assurance of Pitt's sincerity being made, and adding, "*of course* this could not be given!" *Could* not? That it *was* not is not surprising; considering that it is notorious that Pitt made a convenience of the slave question, and was not in earnest thereon at all. That it was not is natural; calling to mind the narrow-minded blundering policy then adopted towards France, and reflecting on the supercilious self-righteous pride which formed the basis of such religionists as him addressed; whereby, professing a reverence for God's book, the precepts therein written are virtually broken, and men, erring men, judge their brothers, pharisee-like; although, we read, that to their own Maker they stand or fall. Considering these things, it is not to be wondered at that the assurance was not given; that an answer was not vouchsafed: but that, were our English abolitionists as sincere as they professed to have been, it could and should have been accorded, we must maintain. To the fact of it not having been, we may attribute Mirabeau never having introduced his moderate and well-digested scheme; so that,

what was not well done by him, had to be very badly done by Barrère three years after his death.

When waiting for a reply, however, Mirabeau busied himself with preparing the oration wherewith to lay this all-important subject before the Assembly. Dumont speaks of him labouring at it with "much affection;"* and, indeed, there is not a line in it but carries with it an irresistible proof of how much Mirabeau had this benevolent design at heart. It is an enormous production; and, if printed, would occupy upwards of two hundred pages such as these; and, had it been delivered, it could hardly have failed to have gained the reputation of being Mirabeau's most triumphant oratoric achievement, as it would have indubitably been his longest. From this galaxy of beauties, we now make a few selections.

The opening is singularly bold.

"I am now undertaking to plead before you the cause of a race of men, who, endowed with a fatal pre-eminence among the unfortunate—experiencing in a few years all the griefs which humanity is subject to—live, suffer, and die slaves of the most detestable tyranny of which history has transmitted us accounts.

"You already know that I speak of the slaves of America.

"I will neither degrade this Assembly nor myself, by seeking to prove that the negroes have a right to their liberty! You have already decided that ques-

* Souvenirs, p. 310.

tion, because you have declared that *all men* ARE BORN AND DIE EQUAL AND FREE; and it is not on this side of the Atlantic that corrupted sophists will dare to assert that the negroes are not men!"

The reader must not imagine from this that Mirabeau asked or advocated anything so absurdly dangerous, as that the slave population should be emancipated instanter. He was too wise a man to propose any such thing: in this, as in almost every measure propagated by him, moderation is predominant; and the scheme he herein proposes, being bound by no anti-slavery theory, is a feasible method and no mere theory. He wished the slave-trade to be immediately stopped, and that those who were already slaves should work themselves gradually free: and experience has taught us, whatever pseudo-humanity and sentimental cant may say, that such a measure was highly preferable to complete emancipation. A man who has been born and bred a slave is less safe to cast on the world, freed in an instant, than a lunatic: with equal reason, a lad of twelve might suddenly be declared a major. It is from this very reason that true freedom never yet was, and never will be, gained by a revolution: it is, like the diamond, the slow growth of centuries.

We will not seek, for an instant, to follow Mirabeau in his arguments; they are too lengthy, and the world has already passed an emphatic assent upon them all. A few disconnected excerpts is all we seek to give.

The supporters of the slave-trade had asserted that it was not *an inhuman commerce.* Mark how Mirabeau replies:—

"Count for nothing the desolations, the incendiaries, the pillages, to which it is necessary to devote the African coast, in order to obtain them at all—with the pains and infinite agonies, the small number of blacks which survive their capture; count for nothing those who during the voyage die, or perish in the distraction of despair; but figure what manner of voyage that is of two thousand, often three thousand, leagues. Behold the model of a vessel laden with these unfortunate beings, and seek not to turn away your gaze! How they are piled one upon the other! How they are crammed into the between-decks! unable to stand erect: nay, even seated, their heads are bowed. More than that, they cannot move their members, tightly bound, nor even their bodies; for, partakers of all the wants, of all the miseries of him who shares their irons, each man is attached to another: often to a dying one, often to a dead body! Mark how the vessel when it rolls hurts them, mutilates them, bruises them against each other, tears them with their own chains, and presents thus a thousand tortures in a single picture! They crouch themselves down, all the space is filled; and the insensate cupidity which should succour them has not even foreseen that no room for passage remains, but that it is necessary to tread under foot the bodies of the living victims.

Have they, at the least a sufficient quantity of wholesome air? Let us calculate it together. A space of a little less than six feet in length, and a little more than a foot in breadth, is the base of the column of air, the smallest possible, which has to suffice for the respiration of each one; so vitiated in a short time in its nature, little renewed by the narrow apertures (which stormy weather, rain, and a hundred divers occurrences, often require to be closed) that air speedily changes into poison. But why should they have more than that? Why should they have it pure? The poor wretches! I see them, I hear them gasping for breath: their parched and protruded tongues paint their anguish, and cannot further express it! How they hang to, how they cluster round, the grates! How they endeavour to catch even rays of light, in the vain hope of cooling themselves thereby, were it only for an instant!

"Listen to those groans—behold the last efforts of these wretches, who feel themselves suffocating—then all is silence! That air meted out by barbarity, that air impregnated with grief, with despair, and with blood, is nothing better than a homicidal atmosphere of pestilential vapours; and, despite your efforts, room is only given to the victims by the death of half the captives.

"Let us follow that vessel, or rather that long floating bier, as it traverses the seas which divide the two hemispheres. The wretch who beholds his

companion perishing, in vain refrains from motion; the only manner in which he can assist him. Many a time in the course of a day they forget that they are attached to nothing save a corpse; and so is reproduced, as an ordinary event, that torture which has rendered its inventor the type of the most frightful tyrants. The horrible dungeon, as it moves, depopulates itself more and more: negroes and sailors are alike mown down. The most revolting plagues accumulating one upon another, frustrate, by their ravages, the very avarice which has reared them: the very avarice which has raised gold to buy the men, but would not do it to procure them air—*and this commerce is not inhuman!*"

And so on, until he has drawn the most powerfully vivid of all the numerous horrible pictures the slavery question produced. The following is in reply to the current and popular argument of Great Britain reaping the advantage of the French abolition:—

"Ah! do not let us fear in this instance that political duplicity wherewith but too often there has been occasion to accuse England. Rest assured that the sympathy of the most enlightened and the most influential of the English, associates them to the cause I now plead before you: if we had anything to fear, it would be rather that their genius would step before us in the abolition of this traffic! It is too easy to perceive what would then be their political system in this affair: friends, from that moment,

of the Africans, to what an extent would not England carry the noble and great offices of friendship? Would it astonish any one to behold her flying swiftly to the coasts of Africa, to defend them against the barbarians trafficking in slaves;* against even her own islands, against all the efforts of Jamaica: if, in defiance of the mother country, that great isle perseveres in the fatal practices of the commerce in negroes? And what power would hinder England from undertaking that magnanimous crusade? or rather, what power would be so little heedful of its own honour to undertake such an odious and perilous enterprise? No, the enlightened friends of humanity never will draw back: the one of the two nations, which the first shall abolish the slave-trade, will force, almost immediately, the other to imitate her: she will have the voices of two worlds for her auxiliaries; she will reap without cost immense advantages, and an imperishable glory!

"Ah! if we but understood true courage, if our humanity did not expend itself in vain discourses; we should sacrifice in many instances our sensuality to the duties which alone can render us free and happy: we should refuse all the productions watered with tears and blood; we should repulse them, until, presented to commerce by pure hands, they did

* It was not until seventeen years after this was written that slavery was abolished by England: and has not our conduct been exactly as predicted?

not call to mind the idea of the most horrible of crimes."

Our last extract shall be this concluding paragraph.

"Representatives of the French! do not allow the sacred fire to be extinguished in your keeping! *Do not allow a moment so favourable as the present for softening national enmities to escape you! Found, upon the eternal and unshakeable basis of the interests of humanity, an alliance of the two first powers of Europe; and let them henceforth command the peace of the entire world, instead of deluging it with blood by their factious quarrels.* Let that beautiful system be your pious diplomacy: that alone is vast enough to conciliate all, to repress all; it is that which, making not the rivalties of commerce, but its absurd hatreds disappear, will confide to the paternal and vigilant care of France and England the liberty of the two hemispheres. For the good of the human race, we should thus imitate the Primary Cause who rules the universe in silence, and who, giving to all an uniform impulse, leaves, nevertheless, an immense latitude to secondary causes!

"Representatives of the French! ye are worthy of soaring to that dignified position. Manifest to all the nations what is the true spirit of our Revolution; which astonishes them so much, which moves them, which excites all their sympathies, but which ought also to instruct them by generous and virtuous examples: all the more necessary, since the blind

prejudices of ignorance, or the interested enmity of a proud aristocracy, tend to render that Revolution misunderstood, even while they calumniate it. Prove to the universe that if circumstances have favoured your noble and rapid victories over tyranny, they are due, above all, to the inspiration of your philanthropy, to its zeal and intelligence, to its unbending courage and its fervid perseverance; be the protectors of suffering humanity in Jamaica as in St. Domingo, in your colonies as well as in those of the other European states: your decree, longed for in the negro's hut, is the sole hope of his misery. Dry with a word the tears of these unfortunate beings: render their destiny less wretched by opening to them the hope of being one day happier; like the gods, grant all just prayers: spread, by so doing, over all climates the regenerative influence of peace and liberty, and let the restorers of France give freedom to the world!

"I do therefore propose,—

"1st, That his Majesty be supplicated to incessantly lay before the King of Great Britain, the desire of the National Assembly to consult with the English legislation, to effect in a peaceable and lasting manner the entire abolition of the trade in blacks.

"2ndly, That the National Assembly name a committee to inquire into the actual troubles which distract the French Colonies; and, in order to present speedily its opinion, above all, into the best method of re-establishing order, that, under a constitution

and laws adapted to our colonies, the liberty of the negroes may be prepared to be established: that the public well-being may be placed upon its true foundations, and so attach more and more to the mother country (become now an equitable mother) those of her children whom, to the present time, she has disinherited from all the rights and privileges of the human race!"

From these extracts, the reader will be able to form an idea of how magnificent a production is the whole composition: this philanthropic and humane oration, wrung from the overflowing benevolent heart of Mirabeau; who ever, amid the hubbub and strife of his arduous political career, and the riotous current of his private life, had still large sympathies for suffering humanity, whether in the aggregate or as individuals: this oration, wrung from him, as one can imagine, in the long midnight watches, with the terrible birth-travail of the heart and brain: this oration was never delivered;—and wherefore? We have no cause to be proud when we reply thereto: it was because the British Philanthropist never saw good to return a reply unto a respectful and far too humble letter; because, so narrow-minded and insulated was our foreign policy in those days, that even on a question of common humanity, a friendly correspondence could not take place between a British minister and a foreign statesman. Let the reader compare the enlarged sentiments expressed by Mirabeau in the conclusion of this address, with the meagre

and confined views propounded in our House of Commons, down to a very late period, and draw his own conclusions.

We have been led to devote so much space to this almost extraneous matter, not from any importance in the subject now, but because it is so honourable to the memory of Mirabeau. The brilliances of the head, they dazzle men's eyes and compel admiration for a time, but they are comet-like in their essence, and fleetly fade; but the benevolent impulses of the heart endure, ever verdant, for long years, inducing love and sympathetic affection. The *great* deed is a thing of earth, essentially, and dies with its enactor; but the *good* deed lives for ever: its influence is of God, and so immortal, and its spirit is not of this world: it is the passport of Eternity!

CHAPTER IX.

MIRABEAU SPEAKING—EULOGIUM ON FRANKLIN—MISCELLANEOUS — MONETARY SPEECHES — THE CHATELET IMPEACHMENT — SPEECH ON THE CLERICAL AFFAIRS—MISCELLANEOUS.

From May 24th to the close of 1790.

FOR a considerable space have we been seeing *what* Mirabeau speaks; let us now briefly examine how and in what manner he speaks it.

When not speaking, he is never quiet; with his keen eye fixed upon the speaker, he every now and then demonstrates by some outward sign the inner feeling of his heart. Now applauding, for there is none applaud more heartily than he; now, with his lip curled in proud disdain; now, making gestures of vehement dissent, or seizing a paper and hurriedly passing a comment to a friend, or making a note for his own use. So is he in the Assembly when not speaking. The manner in which he delivers his orations varies much. If he is reading one of his more elaborately-finished speeches—speeches which have received the sugges-

tions and emendations of his literary hodmen, it is notorious that he does not deliver them well: he hesitates, recalls or miscalls words; nay, very often, only rescues himself from imminent likelihood of a failure, by suddenly abandoning his written speech, and branching off into some impulsive and unstudied coruscation. But it is when he is delivering some of his greater efforts—say his "Peace and War" oration, or one of his extemporaneous replies or outbursts, that the physical man rises to the same level as the spiritual—that the actor is worthy of the thinker. All eyes are upon him as he sits, while the debate is yet going on: suddenly he is seen to start unto his feet, and hurry, with long and heavy strides, towards the tribune. Then, high above the anxious expectant masses, aloft in mid air, appears his form, and a breathless silence steals over the assemblage, as the renowned Titan-orator essays to discourse a little. His beginning is not striking; slightly stooping his form and casting down his glance, his voice sounds low and but semi-audible, and his language is confused and scarce intelligible, like that of a dreamy, absent man; but suddenly, even while you are wondering if that tedious prater can be the great Mirabeau, his whole body is convulsed, like a rapt Cassandra or Pythoness; his entire frame quivers with emotion; he flings back his head and tosses his long, thick locks, defiantly; expands the broad surface of his ample breast; his nostrils dilate, and his large black eyes glare with a fearful and miraculous light;

his low tremulous accents swell into powerful and melodious organ notes, and roll richly through the spacious hall: and then, with his arms keeping singular and half-grotesque action-accompaniment, he pours forth, in an unbroken and miraculous stream, the riches of his exalted and no less miraculous intellect; until his very enemies are constrained to exclaim, "The age of the mythologic deities is not past: here, in these latter times, is a man-god." So speaks King Mirabeau unto his liegemen.

The supernatural labours Mirabeau performed in carrying his motion on the war-declaration question, and in combating the fierce rancour of the anarchists thereupon incurred, brought on a severe attack of ophthalmia and partial blindness, to which he had been a victim ever since his sojourn at Vincennes; and which prevented his attending the debates for about a fortnight. On the 11th of June, news reached Paris, that Mirabeau's friend, the venerable Franklin, had died on the 17th of the preceding April, at Boston; and on the same day Mirabeau appeared in the tribune, and pronounced to a silent and sympathetic audience, the following elegant eulogium:—

"Franklin is dead! Returned into the bosom of the divinity is that genius which freed America, and rayed forth upon Europe torrents of light.

"The sage whom the two worlds alike claim—the man for whom the history of science and the

history of empires are disputing—held, beyond doubt, an elevated rank in the human species.

"For long enough have political cabinets notified the death of those who were only great in their funeral orations; for long enough has court-etiquette proclaimed hypocritical mourning. Nations should only wear mourning for their benefactors. The representatives of nations ought only to recommend to their homage the heroes of humanity.

"The Congress has ordained, in the fourteen States of the confederation, a mourning of two months for the death of Franklin; and America is acquitting, at this very moment, that tribute of veneration for one of the fathers of her constitution.

"Would it not be worthy of us, gentlemen, to join in that religious act; to participate in that homage, rendered, before the face of the universe, both to the rights of man and to the philosopher who has the most contributed to extend their acknowledgment over all the world? Antiquity would have raised altars to that vast and powerful genius; who, for the advantage of mortals, embracing in his aspirations heaven and the earth, knew how to tame tyrants and their thunderbolts. France, enlightened and free, owes at the least an expression of remembrance and regret for one of the greatest men who have ever aided philosophy and liberty.

"I propose that it be decreed that the National Assembly wear mourning during three days for Benjamin Franklin."

This was unanimously decreed and complied with: save by d'Espréménil, who obstinately appeared in anything rather than mourning.

On the 19th of June, the Assembly, with inconsiderate zeal, abolished all titles, &c. and prohibited the use of liveries, heraldic signs, &c. In this Mirabeau took no share, but gave it his complete defiance; retaining till death his liveries, arms, and titles.

On the 28th, Mirabeau appeared in his character of anti-monopolist, in opposing a proposed decree, whereby all Indian imports were to be confined to the port of L'Orient: the principles of unfettered commerce, and the inadvisability of legislative interference in such matters, are forcibly expounded in his speech thereon. On the 14th of July, was enacted that piece of egregious national tomfoolery, the immense Federation in the Champ-de-Mars: with which Mirabeau, from his letters, appears very justly to have had no sympathy (as, indeed, with the mountebank system he rarely had), neither to have taken the prominent place therein his popularity and position seem to have demanded. His grace of Autun and Lafayette performed on that occasion the respective parts of national clown and pantaloon: to their individual satisfaction, doubtless.

During the whole of July and August, Mirabeau attended few debates, and those of no moment. This was owing to his continued illness, and recurring attacks of fever and semi-blindness; and also, in a very great measure, to his constantly-increasing

weariness of the pulling-down system: he panted to be rebuilding: he had grown sick of being merely a destroying angel, and he wished to begin his other nobler mission. Beside all this, he entertained for the Assembly a daily deepening aversion and contempt.

On the 27th of August, however, he spoke on a very important subject—that of assignats and monetary affairs in general. The accession of the church-estates to the government had caused Necker to relieve his embarrassment, by an issue of paper-money to the extent of four hundred millions of francs.* These had suffered a great depreciation, and the consequence was that Necker and the other ministers were opposed to a new issue; and the subject being introduced within the Assembly, Mirabeau warmly advocated a continued issue, in opposition to Talleyrand and other deputies. Being wholly uninformed on the subject of currency in general, and of French currency in particular, we could not for an instant think of giving an analysis of Mirabeau's arguments: we shall confine ourselves to stating that, after many stormy debates, on the 29th of September, Mirabeau's ideas were adopted; the Assembly sanctioning, by a majority of ninety-five, a fresh issue of eight hundred millions of assignats, subject to various lesser laws and regulations perplexing to the unmonetary mind.

On the 28th, and two or three following days,

* 16,000,000*l.*

Mirabeau was occupied in defending his brother; the viscount; in a committee of the Assembly, charged to inquire into his conduct and subsequent resignation. The viscount was colonel of a regiment stationed at Perpignan, and news reaching him that his corps were impregnated with the disaffection so dangerously prevalent among the soldiers, he flew instantly to their quarters, in order to extinguish it by his overwhelming influence. This influence, it was soon proved, had been nullified by his unpopular conduct in the Assembly, and he therefore found himself unable to allay the insurgents. In supreme disgust he took away their colours, and left them. But if he was exasperated with the troops, so were they with him by this rash act of punishment. He was pursued and overtaken at Castelnaudery, at which place he was held prisoner by the mayor, as a pledge for the return of the colours. This was early in June: on the 18th, the Assembly prayed the king to see to the safety of the viscount. The day following, Mirabeau himself, arguing upon the inviolability of members, demanded that the mayor should be ordered to deliver up the viscount, and that that individual should be summoned to answer for his conduct to the Assembly. This was agreed to; and on the 27th Mirabeau again befriended his brother, by procuring him permission to defend himself, not as a prisoner from the bar, but as a deputy from the tribune. This was also agreed to; and the viscount defended himself. But a committee appointed

to examine the matter on the 27th of August, decided that there were grounds for accusation; proposing that the viscount should be tried by a council of war, or court-martial. To this the hasty and aristocratic Barrel responded by resigning his commission and seat, and crossing the Rhine to his friends, the emigrants. In the face of this, Mirabeau fought manfully for his brother, contending earnestly that there was no ground for accusation; but, on the 2nd of September, the Assembly decided that there was: and so the case was ended.

Nothing of importance occurs from that day to the 2nd of October; when the Assembly was to decide whether or not the Châtelet was correct, when it had arrived at the conclusion that the evidence received by them was sufficient to warrant the impeachment of the Duke of Orleans and Mirabeau, for having caused the Versailles insurrection. Having disposed of this subject already, we shall only say that the Assembly emphatically declared that it was not so: that "Mirabeau descended to his place amid the noise of the most violent and universal applause, which accompanied him unto his place, and prolonged itself long after he was seated. *The nobles, bishops, witnesses — ashamed, embarrassed — seemed to have changed places; and the accusers found themselves accused:*"* that, in our opinion, Mirabeau entirely demolishes the Châtelet evidence; and that whosoever wishes to judge for himself, will find the reply

* Ferrières, ii. 181.

at full length in the eighth volume of the *Fils Adoptif.*

On the 21st, Mirabeau strenuously advocated the national tricolor being substituted for the old white standard in the French navy; which the foolish and culpably rash ministers had hitherto excluded therefrom. Also, at the same period, he prepared a speech on the ministers having seats in the Assembly, with a view to obtaining a retraction of their former decree: but it was never introduced.

A few remarks on the aspect of Europe was found among his papers; and most probably were written somewhere about this time. They are remarkable, if it were only for their forcible conclusion, which is thus:—

"Burke has said that 'France only presents to the politician a great void:' Burke has uttered a great absurdity, for that void is a volcano; whereof one cannot, without imprudence, for one moment lose sight of either the subterraneous agitations, or the probable eruptions!"

On the 6th of November, Mirabeau appeared at the bar, at the head of a deputation of the "Society of Friends of the Constitution" (since the "Jacobins"), and there read an address, written by him, praying that the Tennis-Court should be decreed a national monument, and preserved as such. A few days after, occurred the duel between Charles Lameth and the Duke of Castries; which led to the famous sacking of the hotel of the latter on the

12th; and on the 13th, the Assembly in taking cognizance of the riot, experienced what we may term a Billingsgate debate, in which Mirabeau also joined, with a singular and reprehensible coarseness. In censuring the rioters, he was also animadverting, very justly, on the insanely irritating speeches made by the *coté droit*, when the Marquis of Foucault, interrupting him, exclaimed, "M. de Mirabeau always crushes me with irony;" to which Mirabeau replied promptly, "Since you are not fond of irony, you shall have the profoundest contempt." A reply which is curious as an instance of to what vulgarity a great man may descend.

One of the most delicate and most prominent of all topics whereunto the attention of the legislature was called, was that of the clerical affairs. The abolition of tithes—the absorption of the church property—had been far from agreeable to the whole nation; and as the priests stirred up endless strife, the Assembly, by way of silencing them, on the 12th of July, passed a batch of edicts, under the head of, "The Civil Constitution of the Clergy," wherein a great onslaught was made upon the ecclesiastical privileges. The title of archbishop was entirely swept away; the number of bishops was reduced, and their dioceses equalized; the curés were thenceforth to be elected by the people; every priest was to take an oath of fidelity to the nation; and innumerable other such like regulations were adopted.

On no subject are evil passions aroused so easily as on that of religion; and a zealous dogmatist can hardly ever be a Christian. Therefore, there arose the most violent opposition to these decrees; the king refused his sanction timidly for some time, and then in August gave them his assent: wherefor Pope Pius VI. favoured him with an insolent reproachful letter. However just their quarrel, one thing is very certain, the clergy demeaned themselves in their opposition in an outrageous and unclerical manner. The people were excited by them everywhere to rise against the constituted authorities; and nothing was spared, from Jesuitic sophistry to Papal bulls, to incite or terrify the ignorant to riot and incendiarism. This conduct, at once rebellious and dangerous, was inquired into by a special committee, who brought up its report on the 26th of November; and on the 27th Mirabeau propounded his opinion on the subjects in consideration.

His views on that momentous and delicate question are at once temperate, just, and elevated; there is a judicious admixture of tearing down numerous anomalies and superstitious prejudices, and of allaying the illiberal, persecuting spirit, then dominant among the revolutionary party in the Assembly. The former portion of his speech is devoted to a refutation of the casuistic and seditious positions taken by the clergy in their numerous pamphlets, &c.; and the latter to a brief proposal of several decrees to be passed relative thereunto.

The clergy asserted that the Pope was the power to decide the dispute, and not the National Assembly; the Pope being a higher authority to all true Catholics. This Mirabeau brands as an attempt to "arm France catholic against France free," and speedily dismisses it as an exploded usurpation. They then charged the Assembly with "straitening the ancient jurisdiction of the church, and of misconceiving the necessity and limits of a power which she exercised under the Pagan emperors, and even in the days of persecution." To this he replies with the invincible argument, that they being then unconnected with the State, and self-supported, had every right to unlimited sway over the church; which then was alone injured by their spiritual tyranny. Since when, the State, having lifted the church from its poverty and endowed her with riches, had every right to direct her civil constitution. He paints the anxiety, the efforts of the church to effect an avowal, an union with the State, and then administers this severe reproof.

"It is at the very moment when you are rendering her inseparable from the nation; when you are incorporating her in the existence of this great empire; when you are consecrating to the perpetuating of her reign and her worship the solidest portion of the substance of the State: it is at the very moment when you are so gloriously making her share in the division of the finest kingdom in the universe, and when, planting the sign of Christianity upon the

heights of all the departments of France, you are confessing before the face of all nations and all centuries that GOD is as necessary as liberty to the French people—it is at this very moment that our bishops have chosen to denounce you as violators of the rights of religion; to brand you with the character of the ancient persecutors of Christianity; to impute to you, by consequence, the crime of having wished to tear, to wither up, the last resource of public order; to extinguish the last hope of unfortunate virtue!"

The next objection was, that the election of the *curés* by the people would ruin religion. To this he replies, by demonstrating how pure and uncorrupt was the existing system of appointment; and manifesting that, if ancient forms were so irrefragable, the system of the congregation electing its own pastor was the earliest form of all. But to evade this, the clergy had asserted that the proposed system of popular priest-choosing was at variance with the early forms of election, and so inadmissible. This ridiculous cavil Mirabeau answers, by showing how remorselessly they could, when their interest or comfort was concerned, forget the usages of antiquity; and by impeaching the sincerity of their veneration for these ancient formulas.

"They do not sincerely desire order and justice; they only wish to sow division, and to disorganize; they are only irritated by the force of that dignity wherewith you have opposed the torrent of sacerdotal

passions; they seek to paralyze the constitution of the State, in order to revive the ancient constitution of the clergy; they aspire to multiply all your labours by the length and continuity of the interruptions they give you, and to see all our political scenes resolve themselves into the horrors of a religious war."

He then goes on to the next objection, that the legislature had no right of interference with the dioceses and jurisdiction of the bishops. The function of bishop is, Mirabeau affirms, a religious office; and in that capacity a bishop is a bishop to all catholics, whether in his diocese or not, in his capacity of divine overseer: but in that of civil lord, whose seignorial rights are confined within a certain boundary, he is only bishop to the inhabitants of his diocese; consequently, while the spiritual function of the bishop is a divine institution, that of the diocesan is purely civil. Then, proceeding to consider the deleterious results of this religious sedition, he launches at them the following warning:—

"Prelates and pastors! I do not possess beyond the rest of mortals the gift of prophecy, but I have some knowledge of the characters of men, and of the course of events. Are you aware what will happen, if the ecclesiastics, persevering in their opposition to the spirit of liberty, make the people at last despair of their conversion to the constitution, and, consequently, of their aptitude for being citizens? The public indignation, risen to its height,

will no longer permit the instruction of the nation to remain confided to the enemies of your prosperity; and that which would be to-day, perhaps, a violent motion, will not be delayed from gaining the character of a reasonable and wise measure, commanded by the necessity of maintaining the safety of the State. They will propose to the National Assembly, as the only means for purifying the heart of the nation of all the ancient leaven, which would fain reinfuse itself into its organs,—they will propose to decree the universal nullity of all ecclesiastical appointments made under the old system: to submit them all to the election of the departments; to instruct the people to select for themselves pastors worthy of their confidence, that they might thus be enabled to cherish in the apostles of religion the friends of their deliverance and their liberty."

He then concluded by submitting a variety of decrees, in order, by moderate and effective present legislation, to do away with the necessity for such future severity. These were, 1st, To declare every bishop deposed who might be convicted of having applied to the Holy See for his episcopal investment. 2nd, To declare the vacancy of the see of any bishop who should have solicited from the Pope any canonical investment giving him power over any district not included in his new diocese. 3rd, To depose also any bishop who should refuse to ordain *curés* elected under the new system. 4th, To withhold the salary from any ecclesiastic who should

protest against any decree of the Assembly, approved and sanctioned by the king. 5th, To prosecute for the crime of nation-treason, all ecclesiastics who, in any pastoral letter, &c. should decry the laws or the revolution. 6th, To declare that vicars must be chosen from ecclesiastics constitutionally elected. 7th, To declare that none can administer confession who have not taken the civic oath before the municipality. And lastly, That, the number of priests being swollen inordinately by the opening of the convents, all ordinations should be prohibited for the time being.

If these measures seem tyrannous and too severe, let the fact of their being rejected by the Assembly as too moderate, be their excuse. There is no despotism so terrible as that of a thousand autocrats, calling themselves lovers of freedom. See how beautifully liberty of conscience and gentle castigation are blended in the decrees passed by the Assembly, instead of those Mirabeau propounded. "That all ecclesiastics in exercise of their functions, prelates, *curés*, vicars, &c. &c. be compelled to take the civic oath with no delay whatsoever. That all ecclesiastical deputies be compelled to receive the oath in presence of the Assembly within eight days; all refusing, to be expelled. That ecclesiastics who, after having taken the oath, refuse to obey sanctioned decrees, who form or excite oppositions, be deprived of their salary, prosecuted as rebels, stripped of their rights as active citizens, and ren-

dered incapable of any public function. That all ecclesiastics remaining in the exercise of their functions, who would do so without having taken the oath; all titularies of suppressed offices endeavouring to continue them, shall be prosecuted as disturbers of the public repose." And it needed a revolution to produce a law like that! Nero or our Mary would have enacted one as good.

Had Mirabeau's code been adopted, he would have followed it up with other reforms in the ecclesiastical law: among others was the abolition of forced celibacy, on which topic he prepared an acutely-argued discourse; but which he never delivered. He combats the celibacists in this manner:—

"A single glance upon the organization of all nature, suffices to discover what has been the real will of the Creator: he himself has given the precept of marriage: he has reprobated even involuntary sterility; and these men have dared to upraise themselves against God, by opposing an unnatural and cruel law to that law of peace and love; the primitive basis, the divine principle of society.

"But if marriage has founded society, society can only be preserved by marriage: it appertains, therefore, as much to polity as to religion; for they have one common end,—the union, multiplication, and happiness of man.

"What, in effect, really is marriage? A civil contract, whereof all the consequences relate to

society; and which, altogether, is under the domain of the civil laws.

"In what manner, to what end, does the Church interfere in marriage? She blesses it: she adjusts it to a religious form, we name a sacrament; but that holy ceremony, exterior to the matrimonial contract, cannot constitute its essence. It is meet enough for religion to proclaim marriage, to give it a character of publicity, to mark with a seal of honour and decency the cohabitation of the espoused twain, already bound by their contract; and, if it thus solemnizes their union, it is, above all, to make it an example: to cover with flowers that inevitable chain which binds the two sexes to nature as to society.

"Religion counsels therefore, commands therefore, the marriage it thus consecrates: and, lo and behold, the ministers of that religion shun it, combat it, despise it! Who cannot see that these ministers are not herein the organs of religion, but rather the slaves of some other doctrine less pure; of some other power less legitimate?"

"Thus the Church has been able to say to a numerous class of citizens; to those whom she selects to be an example to the world:—'It is in vain that nature imposes upon you the obligation of perpetuating your existence by your descendants; that she solicits you thereunto by the most universal, the most imperious law: it is in vain that religion incites you to conjugal union, by precepts, by examples, by authorities; it is in vain that society, agreeing with

religion and nature, presses you to form that honourable, that virtuous tie; it matters nought: we withhold from you as profane that which nature, religion, society call sacred; we isolate you from the civil world; you shall be holy after your own fashion; you shall live in society, but you shall not live for her; you shall only be united to us; your holiness shall be an abnegation of the quality of man; your state, a violation of the first social duty."

On the 12th of December, he spoke at considerable length on the subject of a large issue of coin, in small pieces of silver—*billon*—and copper; and his speech is a purely mercantile and mechanical examination into tedious details.

On the 13th, he introduced a string of propositions relative to the organization of the municipalities and tribunals. On the 20th, he proposed that the king should be desired to send a corps of soldiers and three commissioners to Aix: which town had been distracted by prison-forcings and aristocratic massacres; and Mirabeau himself procured a passport, with the intent to endeavour to allay the excited phrenzy in person, by his popularity and decision; but press of business prevented him from going.

And so, amid debatings and Aix riotings, and innumerable such like disturbances, did 1790 fade away from him. His last year had been reaped from the field of Time, and was gathered into the garner of Eternity; there to remain until that great

day when the wheat is winnowed from the chaff; when the good and true deed is parted from the bad and false deed: that to be placed for ever, star-glittering, in the diadem of Heaven; this to be speedily blown into annihilation, or burnt in the inexorable fires of hell: for there is no act, no word, no thought even, that has not an everlasting tendency; be it good or evil; that does not remain through all eternity a testimony of our shame or glory!

CHAPTER X.

ON THE CLERGY AGAIN—WAR MEASURE—ON THE TOBACCO DUTIES—MIRABEAU PRESIDENT—DEPUTATION OF QUAKERS—SPEECH ON THE EMIGRATION LAWS—MISCELLANEOUS—ON THE REGENCY.

January 1st to March 22nd, 1791.

THE story of Mirabeau's legislative career draws fleetly to a close; fading away like an expiring bale-fire, which having irradiated from its lofty mountain-seat, a beacon through the grim night season, pales slowly as the great to-morrow dawns.

The decree of the 27th of November, relative to the clergy, having been cunningly evaded by that body, it became necessary again to take cognizance of their conduct. On the 4th of January, the Assembly ordered the ecclesiastical deputies to take the oath before leaving the hall: much against the wish of Mirabeau, who was as strong an opponent of the tyranny of democracy as of

that of aristocracy. The majority did not comply; and so, having been a second time ordered, the Assembly demanded that the law should have its course, and the various pains and penalties be put into immediate execution. With a view to filling the vacancies thus likely to occur, Mirabeau proposed, that any priest who had been a minister for five years should be eligible to the highest offices in the church. This was passed on the 7th; and the Assembly also, by way of vindicating its conduct to the nation, appointed a committee to prepare an address to the people, on the subject of the clerical affairs. This the committee were engaged in compiling, when they heard that Mirabeau had already completed a similar work; they, therefore, made application to him, and the result was, that on the 14th, instead of the committee bringing up its address, Mirabeau appeared in the tribune, and read one of his own composition, to which the committee had given their sanction.

If extended liberality, leagued to a firm devotion to religion and morality; if vehement denunciation, united to splendid and picturesque imagery; fierce sarcasm and invective, to tear-drawing exhortations and invitations; and these, couched in the most forcible and elegant language; and, added to all this, if the hearty and constantly-recurring plaudits of the hearers be any criterion of eloquence; we may very safely venture to affirm that this is the completest, most brilliant, and altogether masterly of all

Mirabeau's parliamentary efforts. It is as the last red gleam the summer sun shoots up into the western heavens ere it sinks beneath the dim horizon. Beyond all this, it possesses the incalculable advantage of not being entirely upon a shelved topic; the greater portion being on a subject still interesting—nay, becoming day by day more interesting, and even prominent.

After a few opening remarks, he abruptly enters into the points at issue, thus:—*

"We are reproached with having refused positively to decree that the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman religion is *the religion of the nation:*

"With having changed, without the assent of ecclesiastical authority, the ancient boundaries of the dioceses; and, by that measure, as well as in several branches of the civil organization of the clergy, of having given disturbance to the episcopal power:

"Lastly, with having abolished the ancient manner of nominating pastors, transferring the election to the suffrages of the people.

"Upon these three heads hinge all these accusations of irreligion and persecution, whereby attempts are made to cast a stigma on the uprightness, the wisdom, and the orthodoxy of your representatives;†

* Anxious to give this oration in a garment worthy it, we have departed more than is our custom from the literal wording, though the sense has never in any instance been altered.

† It was in the form of an address to the people, be it remembered.

who are now about to reply, not so much for their own exculpation, as with the view of forewarning the real friends of religion against the clamours of hypocrites, who are foes to the Revolution.

"To declare the Christian* religion to be the *national* religion, would be equivalent to casting a stain upon the dearest and most necessary attribute of Christianity. For the most part, religion is not connected with civil society: it is a relation between man as an individual, and the infinite Being who created him. Could you understand his meaning who told you of a national conscience? Certainly, then, religion is no more national than conscience: for a man is not in reality pious merely because he is a member of some State church; and although there were upon the earth only one religion, and all mankind should unite in professing it, still it would be true that every man would experience a proper sensation of religion, only in proportion as he adhered firmly to his own: that is, only in proportion as he would still cling to that universal religion, were the whole human race to abjure it. . . .

"There can be nothing *national* in an empire, save institutions established for the purpose of effecting political results; and religion being merely the relation between the reason and spirituality of mankind and the Divine reason, the universal spirit it

* He means the "Catholic," but throughout he speaks of the Roman dogmas as the sole Christian code; whereas Mohammedism is considerably nearer Christianity than they are.

worships, that religion cannot, in that light, assume any civil or legislative form. The very essence of Christianity excludes it almost entirely from every scheme of local legislation. God did not ordain that light to give forms and colours to the social organization of the French; but he placed it in the midst of the universe, in order that it might serve as a rallying point and centre of union to all humanity. Why, then, do they not censure us for never having declared that the sun is the national luminary, and that no other sun shall be recognised by law, for the government of our nights and days! . . .

"Christianity, feeble and tottering at its birth, sought not the assistance of laws nor the patronage of governments. Its ministers would have scorned the idea of a *legal* existence; as it was only necessary that God should be apparent in what was his work alone: and at this moment we should feel the want of the most convincing proof of its truth, had those who in earlier times professed that holy religion discovered it in the legislation of empires.

"O, singular inconsistency! Who are they who demand from us, with so much clamour and a bitterness so unchristian-like, an edict for making Christianity constitutional? They are the very men who condemned the new constitution; who represented it as an overthrow of all the laws of justice and wisdom; who, from all sides, cried out against it as the instrument of perverseness, of violence, and of vengeance. They are the very men who informed

us that that constitution would prove the ruin of the State and the shame of the French nation. O, perfidious men! why would ye introduce a religion which ye profess to love and adore, into a legislative system ye so glory in decrying and detesting? Why would ye blend together that which is the most august and holy essence in the universe, with what ye deem the most execrable monument of human malice? . .

"No, men of France, it is not good faith nor sincere piety which arouses amid your representatives such contests about religion: human passions are the cause—passions which endeavour to shroud themselves under an imposing mask, in order to cover with more impunity their dark and iniquitous designs." He here takes a swift survey of the first foundation of Christianity by Christ and his apostles; and so demonstrated that the church, in its purest and most orthodox state, neither had nor sought to gain any temporal authority whatsoever: and so he disposed of the first complaint.

He then attacks the second: that of having unjustifiably altered the boundaries of the dioceses. One would imagine that this subject had been entirely exhausted in his former speech: but such is not the case. There is no repetition of argument, neither is there any lack thereof. He denies expressly that there is any interference in ecclesiastical affairs; proving beyond doubt that the diocese question is a purely civil and territorial question. The man's bishopship is his

relation to Catholicism, he says, and his diocese has nothing to do therewith—is merely his relation to the State. But why require the sanction of the bishop of Rome more than of any other bishop? He is, Mirabeau contends, not any higher than any other, but merely, for convenience sake, the point of centre for the church. St. Peter, he argues, was not higher than St. Paul or St. John; and, therefore, why should the successor of St. Peter have sway over those of St. Paul, or of any other apostle? No: clearly all bishops are equal, "are essentially invested with the management of the universal church, as were the apostles: their mission is actual, direct, and independent of all local limitation. The ordinance of episcopacy suffices for the institution, and they have no more need for the sanction of the Roman Pontiff, than St. Paul had for that of St. Peter."

The third complaint of their having changed the system of appointing pastors, to popular election, is next treated by him in as masterly a manner. He commences by showing from St. Paul, that the ministry is a service for men and not for God, and therefore comes under civil control whenever these men are paid by the civil power.

"The priestly office is a ministry of humanity, of humility, of charity, and of zeal. Hence it is that St. Paul advises, that it should be delegated only to men who are imbued with a sensitive and paternal disposition; to men who have long been accustomed to beneficence, and well known to the people by their

peaceful inclinations, and by their benevolent habits. Hence it is, also, that he points out, as fit judges of their aptitude for the episcopal functions, and for becoming pastors of the people, those who have been witnesses of their behaviour and the objects of their care.

"And yet, because the National Assembly of France, commissioned to proclaim the sacred rights of the people, has reconstituted the election of the ecclesiastics; because the Assembly has re-established the ancient manner of these elections, and rescued from neglect a mode of procedure that in her early bloom of youth was a spring of glory to religion, the ministers of that religion raise the shout of usurpation and irreligion: reprehend, as a wicked attempt upon the authority of the clergy, the restoration of the right of election to the people; and have the boldness to claim, as a necessity, the empty sanction of the Roman Pontiff.

"Formerly, when an immoral pope and an audacious despot manufactured, unknown to the church and to the empire, that profane and infamous contract—that concordat which was nothing better than the coalization of two usurpers for the purpose of dividing between them the privileges and the wealth of France, the nation was seen, with the church at its head, opposing to that robbery the whole power of a unanimous resolution; demanding the restoration of the elections, and with a pertinacious energy claiming the Pragmatic Sanction which alone, till

that period, had formed the common law of the kingdom.

"And it, that impious contract—that simoniacal convention, which, when it was first fabricated, drew down upon it the curses of all the priesthood of this land; it is that criminal agreement between avarice and ambition, that ignominious compact, which during so many successive ages was stamping the most sacred offices with the despicable taint of venality: it is that which, in these days, our prelates have the audacity to demand in the name of religion, in presence of the whole world, beside the cradle of freedom, and in the very sanctuary of those laws which are regenerating at once the altar and the empire!"

It had been urged that the election of pastors by the people would breed nothing but intrigue and disturbance: to which position he opposes the very pure way in which ecclesiastical elections took place under the old system; and then takes up their great objection, that the new popular elections would differ from the ancient forms. His reply thereunto is a *chef d'œuvre* of moral logic.

"Of what kind were the earliest elections which immediately succeeded the establishment of Christianity? A number of disciples were selected, at the advice of the apostles, who were inspired by the Holy Spirit, and endowed with wisdom, to assist them in their apostolic duties: these received from the apostles the imposition of hands, and so became the first deacons.

"But in our times, when and how far did the clergy ever share in the distribution of the diocesan and parochial offices? Episcopal sees were vacant, it was the king who gave them away; rich abbacies were to be conferred, and the court conferred them; large quantities of beneficed livings were in the gift of lay-patrons, and those lay-patrons disposed of them. A heretic, a Jew, by the simple acquisition of certain seignorial rights, obtained the sway over the fate of religion, and over the morality of a multitude of parishes; and so all the high titles and great offices in the church were given out without the consent, or even knowledge, of the clergy.

"Without doubt, there was an age in the church's history, when the priesthood presided in its own assemblies, called together for the express purpose of selecting pastors, and when the people regulated their choice by the votes of the clergy. But why do not our prelates, instead of fixing upon intermediate periods, when the primitive forms were much corrupted, look even so far back as those very elections, so close to the infancy of Christianity, when every city and every town had its own bishop, and when the people alone elected and enthroned their spiritual overseer?

"At the same time, when the priesthood had the influence in the convocations for electing pastors, the poor and ascetic bishops bore the chief portion of the load of the religious ministry: the lower priests were but their assistants. The bishops were the able

individuals who performed the public service, who preached the gospel to the faithful, who examined the children, who bore the alms of the Church into the lurking places of the unfortunate, who visited the public retreats for superannuation, poverty, and infirmity, who traversed, with blistered and reverend feet, the depths of the valleys, and the hard summit of the mountain, for the express end of scattering knowledge and the solace of the faith, among the simple denizens of the fields and villages. Here are facts precisely coëval with the influence of bishops over the selection of ministers. Now, are they prepared to constitute those facts so many items in the ecclesiastical law; to pronounce that the conduct of prelates who do not preach the consolation of the Gospel to their congregation, and who ride in their luxurious chariots, is in opposition to the necessary constitution of the Church?"

Having, then, triumphantly scattered the threefold complaints of the clergy, he commences a severe reproof for their seditious and peace-disturbing conduct; informing them, that however unjust the Assembly's edicts, it was at total variance with the duties of their office to foment uproar and disaffection against the "powers that be;" warning them that their opposition tended to scepticize France: as ere long the people would grow weary of the disputes between the priesthood and the Assembly, and have consequently to decide between Catholicism and Freedom; when, selecting the latter

as a more present good, they would fling overboard altogether the worship of God, to bow before the shrine of liberty. Having laid these dangers before their notice, he then paints in striking colours the delectable state of affairs which would ensue were the clergy, flinging aside all selfish and unchristian opposition, to join heart and soul in the regeneration of the country: in doing which, he delivered this picturesque paragraph.

"Call to mind those early days when Christianity, compelled to concentrate all her glory and treasures in dark and silent caves, exulted with so pure a gladness when news arrived announcing to the self-denying and venerable pontiffs the cessation of the sword of persecution; when the tidings came that a cruel reign was ended, and that a wise and humane monarch had succeeded to the throne; when they could venture, from the deep caverns wherein they had consecrated their altars, to go forth to solace and strengthen the meek piety of their followers, and to send out from under-ground some few gleams of that divine lucency which they guarded as a precious treasure. Now, let us imagine that one of those reverend Christians, suddenly issuing from the ancient catacombs where his remains lie mingled with the dust of so many martyrs, were this day to come and contemplate, in the midst of us, the splendour with which religion here sees herself begirt; were to behold at one sight all those temples, those lofty steeples which raise aloft into the

air the glittering emblem of Christianity, that evangelic cross which towers from the loftiest eminence in each department of this great and illustrious kingdom: what a spectacle for one who, from his day of birth to his grave, had never seen religion except in the lurking-dens of the forest and the wilderness! What inexpressible rapture! What transports! Methinks I hear him exclaim, as that stranger once cried, on seeing from afar the camp of the people of God: 'O, Israel, how beauteous are thy tents! O, Jacob, what order, what majesty in thy pavilions!'"

The whole of this oration had been delivered to a most excited audience: every paragraph, well nigh, had met with the unqualified applause of the Assembly; and many passages had gained a kind of negative praise, from the clerical members of the right having expressed loud dissent. Only a few lines before the last extract, the Abbé Maury had made a mock-humble bow, and retired with several other ecclesiastics; and he had not proceeded much farther, when a member of the right suddenly protested against the Assembly listening to any more, and moved an instantaneous adjournment. Great confusion ensued, amid which M. Régnault proposed that the address should be returned to the committee for revision. To this Mirabeau replied:—

"It is not only the revision that should be ordered; but the entire disfiguration of the address, against which this clamour has been excited. One fact I

ought to mention; which is, that since the second and last readings which it went through in committee, I have not changed a single word of my address: no, not one atom. For my own personal justification, I demand that the address be reported precisely as it is at present. There should not be room even to suspect an alteration: it contains not a line, not an expression, for which I will not be answerable with my head and with my honour."

The Assembly then passed M. Régnault's motion, and Mirabeau finished the reading of the address undisturbed.

The next sitting in which Mirabeau took a prominent share, was that of the 28th of January, on the subject of the national defences. The hostile feeling entertained against France by all the crowned heads of Europe at that period, was commencing to manifest itself in a rather open manner in several States bordering upon France. This led to A. de Lameth proposing a system of regular military organization; upon which proposition the Assembly appointed three committees, among whom was Mirabeau; who, being as usual selected to announce the report of these committees, did so in a very able speech.

As usual, he appears in the character of a common-sense legislator in opposition to excitement and prejudice; and more than half this discourse is devoted to inquiring into the probability of any foreign nation declaring war against them. For this purpose

he takes a survey of the various European powers, and draws his own conclusions. "Sardinia," he says, "would never destroy a useful alliance for a few resentments, whether foreign or domestic." Switzerland, almost French, would never aid a despotism she had overturned herself. Austria had too, extended and heterogeneous dominions to peril the internal safety of the kingdom for a foreign, and, to their king, extraneous war; and to be afraid of a few German magnates, who seem to suppose that a mighty nation should be arrested in the carrying out her laws, from "feeling for some privileged members," is absurd. The only power, therefore, upon whose proceeding a doubt could rest, is England. But England is, whatever a few members of the House of Commons might say, too liberal and enlightened to be an enemy to the freedom of another nation; to plunge into a war to reseat in their places a few dispossessed plunderers.

"It is not, then," he cries on this subject, "an open war that I am fearful of: the embarrassment of their finances, the ability of their ministers, the generosity of the nation, the enlightened men which she possesses in such great numbers, assure me from foreboding direct attempts; but base manœuvres, and secret measures to promote disunion, to balance parties, to play them off one against the other, and so oppose our prosperity: these are what one may dread from several malevolent politicians. They might hope, by favouring discord, by prolonging our

political combats, by giving hopes to the disaffected, to see us fall by degrees into a state of disgust alike for despotism and for liberty; to see us grow desperate of ourselves, consume away slowly, and wither in a political decay."

But he does not consider English ministers capable of such truly villainous conduct. "Such policy," he says, "is so base, that one cannot impute it to any but enemies of humanity; so narrow, that it could only be suited to the most vulgar minds; and so known, as in our days to be little dreaded." And yet it is a policy which there are not wanting men, even in these days, to charge Pitt with having wholesalely employed towards France.*

Having thus shown us that there was certainly no imminent danger to warrant any alarm, he asserts, that owing to some manifestations of hostility in Savoy, they were justified in making some little extraordinary military preparations, and he therefore proposes, 1st, To prepare the National Guard for a state of war; 2nd, To send troops to such parts of the kingdom as might be menaced; 3rd, To determine a retiring pension for recalled ambassadors, and to withdraw all such as are notorious enemies of the

* The writer hereof heard that redoubtable charlatan, Mr. O'Connor, before a very large assembly, resuscitate, and assert as a positive fact, this infamous and exploded lie; from which one may form a pretty accurate idea of the depth of that gentleman's historic research or love of truth.

Revolution, replacing them with constitutional patriots. He then concludes in these words:—

"Entertain no fears that our neighbours will deem the gathering together of these troops as a menace, or a movement capable of exciting suspicion. Our policy is free and frank, and thereon do we build our glory: but so long as the conduct of other governments shall be swathed in clouds, who can blame us for taking sufficient caution for the maintenance of the peace? No; an unjust war can never be the crime of a people who, before all others, has engraved upon the code of its laws, its renunciation of all conquest. An attack is not to be feared from those who would rather desire *to efface the boundaries of all empires, in order to form the human race into one family; who would elevate an altar to peace, upon a pedestal composed of all the instruments of destruction which cover and pollute Europe, and only to maintain against tyrants, arms consecrated by the achievement of liberty.*"

The day following this, the 29th, he took share in a debate on the tobacco duties, and waved his love of unshackled commerce before the State necessities, in supporting an impost of twenty-five livres per hundredweight. It was originally proposed to have been fifty livres, but Mirabeau procured its reduction by arguing that "this excessively high impost encourages smuggling, and necessitates constraints, inspections, &c.; but if you diminish the tax, contraband trade will be less followed, and more easily sup-

pressed, and your import will produce you a much greater amount."

On the 1st of February, Mirabeau took his seat in the Assembly as its president: a somewhat tardy honour. That the most illustrious of all its members should only receive its highest compliment after forty-three others had already been so distinguished, seems very singular; but may easily be explained. Mirabeau was the head of no party: he was his own party; and therefore, while he had all the Right for his opponents, experienced no lack of enmity from the ultra-revolutionary portion of the Left. These, whenever Mirabeau had been proposed, had voted against him, and, with the aid of the Right, outnumbered the *modérés;* and this act of justice would never have been rendered at all, had it not been for the generosity of Duport, the leader of the Jacobins. That gentleman stated to his followers, that until Mirabeau had filled the president's chair, he would never consent to occupy it; and so, on the 29th of January, being Saturday, the whole of the Left supported his election to the presidency for the ensuing fortnight. Dumont asserts that, beyond the affair of Duport, the reason for his appointment was, because his enemies imagined that, deprived of the tribune, he would fail so completely as to lose some portion of his influence as a man of unbounded versatility of genius. But if so, they had miscalculated his power, and were disappointed. Dumont gives a striking account of Mirabeau, as president; which,

having compared it with another or two, and found it to be veracious, we insert:—

"Never," he writes, "had that place been so well filled: he there demonstrated entirely new talents; he transacted business with an order and neatness of which they had no idea; he scattered perplexities; with a word he enlightened a question; with a word he appeased a tumult. His courtesy to all parties, the respect wherewith he treated the Assembly, the precision of his speeches, the answers to the different deputations which came to the bar, answers which—whether prepared, whether extemporaneous—were always made with a dignity and grace, satisfying even when refusing: in a word, his activity, his impartiality, and his presence of mind, added to his reputation and his glory, in a situation which had been the stumbling-block to nearly all his predecessors. He had the art to appear the chief person, and to concentrate the general attention upon himself, at the very time when, not being able to speak from the tribune, he seemed to have been deprived of his highest prerogative. Several of his enemies and his enviers, who had voted for him in order to shelve him, to reduce him to silence, had the chagrin of having added a new laurel to his glory."*

The fact is, that Mirabeau was even more perfect as a gentleman than as an orator, and so shone pre-eminent in a situation where good-breeding was most essential. The French Assembly, unlike our

* Dumont, 264.

parliament, were no laggards. They had no game-killing vacations; and, moreover, had two sittings daily; the one all the forenoon, the other all the evening, often going into the next morning: for they, unfortunately, possessed no Mr. Brotherton. At both of these the president had to be present, and therefore, especially when such an active man as Mirabeau occupied it, the office was by no means a light one.

It would be tedious to give an account of the numerous deputations received by Mirabeau during his presidency, and the admirable answers made by him; we shall, therefore, confine ourselves to one given to a deputation of Quakers on the 10th. These meek and Christian people had applied, on the preceding day, to the Assembly to be allowed to practise their religion in France, and also enjoy their civil peculiarities; and the president's answer was promised for the 10th. But Mirabeau had been so violently attacked with feverish ophthalmia, as to unable him to preside in the morning; in the evening, however, he appeared with his neck bound round with linen to staunch the blood still flowing from the leeches he had been applying to his eyes and temples, and in such state delivered this reply; which that estimable body might yet read with advantage, and draw instruction therefrom.

"The Quakers, who have flown from tyrants and persecutors, could but address themselves with con-

fidence to those legislators who have been the first to reduce into laws the Rights of Man; and it is possible that regenerated France—France in the bosom of peace, for which she always will recommend the most inviolable respect, and which she desires for all other nations—may, perhaps, become a happy Pennsylvania.

"As a philanthropic system, your principles obtain our admiration: they call to our recollection, that the first cradle of each society was a family, united by its manners, by its affections, and by its wants. Ah! without doubt, the sublimest principles would be those which, creating a second time, so to speak, the human species, should approach that primary and virtuous organism.

"The examination of your doctrines, considered as opinions, do not concern us. We have already pronounced. A property which no man would enjoy in common are the movements and the transports of his thought: that sacred domain places man in an hierarchy more elevated than civil society: being a citizen, he only adopts one form of government; being a thinking man, he has no country save the universe. As a religious system, your doctrines will not, therefore, be the object of our deliberations; for the intercourse of each individual with the Being on high is independent of all political institutions. Between God and the heart of each man, what government shall dare to interpose? As social maxims, your claims must be submitted to the

discussion of the legislative body. It will examine whether the form you observe to notify births and marriages, gives sufficient authenticity to that filiation of the human race which the distinction of property renders necessary, independent of good morals; it will discuss, if a declaration, the falsity whereof would incur the penalties established against false witnesses and perjuries, would not be in reality a false oath.

"Estimable citizens! ye deceive yourselves: you have already taken that civic oath which every man worthy of being free regards rather as a pleasure than a duty. You have not called God to witness, but you have attested your conscience; and a pure conscience, is it not as a cloudless sky? That part of man, is it not a ray of the Divinity? You say farther, that an article of your religion forbids you to take arms and to kill, under any pretext whatsoever: that is, without doubt, a beautiful philosophic principle which offers, in whatever shape, such a worship to humanity. But take care that the defence of yourselves and of your fellow-men be not equally a religious duty. Would you, rather than have broken that, have stooped to tyrants? Since we have acquired and won liberty for you and for us, why would you refuse to preserve it? Your brethren of Pennsylvania, had they been less removed from the savages, would they have suffered them to devour their wives, their children, and their old men, rather than repulse them with violence?

And the stupid tyrants, the ferocious conquerors; what are they but savages?

"The Assembly, in its wisdom, will discuss all your requests; and if ever I meet a Quaker, I will say to him—My brother, if thou hast the right to be free, thou hast a right to oppose any who would make thee a slave. Since thou lovest thy fellow-creature, let him not be devoured by tyranny: that would be to slay him thyself. Thou desirest peace: well, then, is it not weakness that causes war? An universal resistance would be an universal peace."

On the 14th, Mirabeau retired from his presidency, and became once again a simple deputy. His death succeeded so suddenly to his presidency, that another deputy had to be elected for the purpose of signing the deeds authenticated during that time.

On the 19th of February, the two poor neglected daughters of Louis XV., the king's aunts, being afraid of, and conscientiously disgusted with, the Revolution, very privately left Versailles; intending for the future to breathe the more orthodox air of Rome. But with an orthodoxy that in a suspicious time bears away from France two royal personages with considerable store of ready cash, the people had very little sympathy. At Moret, a small village, the mayor arrested their progress: but Narbonne and his escort released them, and they went on as far as Arnay-le-Duc, when the municipality again arrested them; and Narbonne returned post-haste to

Paris to obtain permission from the Assembly for their departure.*

On the 24th, the matter began to come under the notice of the Assembly, by some one proposing a censure to be passed on Narbonne for having interfered with the authorities at Moret: in answer to which Mirabeau proposed that the Assembly should proceed to the order of the day. They then brought up the stoppage at Arnay-le-Duc, with the same censure for having endeavoured to defy the municipality: to this Mirabeau replied in a similar manner. The subject of the princesses' departure then came on; Mirabeau contending that they could not censure them for going, as they broke no law in so doing—"and what you may pass to-morrow can have no bearing upon what they do to-day."

"No law impedes their going," he said. "The Assembly was informed of their journey, and it made no obstacle. But in default of a new law for this, they talk of the *safety of the people.* The safety of the people is not concerned as to whether *mesdames* delay three or four days upon their route. Their journey is perhaps a movement of imprudence, but it carries with it no opposition to the law. All good citizens ought, beyond doubt, in the circumstances which at present surround us, to remain at their post, and thereby manifest their attachment to the head of the nation. *Mesdames* have done an impru-

* Carlyle, ii. 152; Thiers, 62.

dent action, and an impolitic one; but not illegal, and this is no place to discuss it."

The Assembly decreed that the municipality of Arnay should be commanded to allow the venerable spinsters to proceed: which they did. But that wholesale suspicion, so disgracefully prominent later on in the Revolution, was excited on this topic: mobs were rampant in Paris; women clamoured round the Tuilleries; frightened poor Monsieur into his wine cellar at the Luxemburgh; and a band of rioters attacked Vincennes, with the intention of bastilling it: all of which was caused by the tremendous peril in which these miserable old ladies' departure placed the nation. There were sufficient of the Ultras in the Assembly to procure a committee to inquire into the advisability of framing a law against emigration. In rendering their report, Chapelier informed the Assembly that such a law could not be reconciled with the spirit of the Constitution; although at the same time submitting a plan for one. This was, however, violently supported; and Mirabeau (Feb. 28), after replying to the supporters, proposed that they should pass to the order of the day. But this was a topic on which the Jacobins felt warmly; their extremest deputies, Barnave, Lameth, Robespierre, &c., were charged with the championship of the anti-emigration cause, and with hot tumult demanded the immediate enactment of a law. Amidst much uproar, Mirabeau ascended the tribune.

"I will not do the committee," he cried, "the

injury of showing to them that this law is worthy of a place in the code of Draco, but that it can never enter into the decrees of the National Assembly of France. What I will undertake to show is, that the barbarity of the law they propose to you is the highest proof of the impracticability of a law on emigration. The law upon emigration is a thing out of your power, because it is impracticable; and it is beneath your wisdom to make a law that it would be impossible to execute, even by anarchizing every part of the empire. It is proven, by the experience of all ages, that with the most despotic, the most concentrated executive, even in the hands of a Busiris, a like law has never been executed: because it is inexecutable. A police measure is certainly in your power: it remains to be known, then, if it be your duty to pronounce it—that is to say, if it be desirable—if you would wish to detain any citizen in the empire, save by the goodness of the law, and the benefits of liberty. For, though it is very plain that you *can* take this measure, it is by no means said that you *ought* to take it; and I will not undertake to prove it: I should, by so doing, wander from the question; which consists in a decision being required as to whether the project of the committee should be deliberated—and I deny it! I declare I should consider myself freed from all oaths of fidelity towards those who would have the infamy to name a dictatorial commission."

Here he was interrupted by the loudest clamours

from the extreme Left; but elevating his voice above these, he concluded—

"The popularity I have been ambitious of acquiring, and which I have had the honour to enjoy like any other, is not a feeble reed. I wished to implant its roots in the earth upon the imperturbable bases of reason and of liberty. If you make a law against emigrants, I swear I will never obey it!"

A torrent of yells and hootings greeted Mirabeau from the Jacobins as he descended from the tribune, and M. Goupil cried spitefully and sullenly, "What right has M. de Mirabeau to assume this dictatorship?" Knowing well the spreading quality of jealousy, Mirabeau flew to the tribune. The president informed him that he had not granted him liberty of speech, but Mirabeau took that liberty.

"I entreat my interrupters," he exclaimed, "to remember that I have always opposed despotism, and that I shall ever do so, wherever it may appear. I beg the Assembly to remark, that the question of adjournment, though apparently simple, involves another question, and presumes, for instance, that a law is to be made."

Here his voice was drowned in the murmurs, groans, hisses, &c., which were launched at him from the far Left; but he fixed his fire-flashing eye steadily upon them, and high above all their din and uproar, was heard the imperious command—

"SILENCE THE THIRTY VOICES! (*Silence aux trente voix*)." And the wretched clique cowered

down into their native nothingness; as shrink the detestable panther-cats of the forest, when the lordly lion awakes his resounding roar.

"If an adjournment be decreed," he cried, in conclusion, "you must decree also, that no riot take place in the mean time."

The Assembly almost unanimously rejected the project, and the boldness of Mirabeau thus attained its merited triumph.

On the 1st March, he appeared at the bar of the Assembly as a member of the Directory of Paris, to present an address written by him, expressing the necessity for several new regulations in the municipality, tending to strengthen the executive force and repress the growing power of the rabble. On the same day, he addressed a memorial to the king in the like capacity; and, as it contains the most touching and beautiful description of a limited monarchy yet written, we give it full place.

"SIRE,

"The organization of the department of Paris has just augmented the number of its functionaries, placed under your command, as supreme inspector of the execution of the laws. Destined by the constitution to assist you therein, these intermediate offices will serve, furthermore, to preserve the love of the people for the monarch, and bind them to him more intimately.

"Instruments and organs are necessary unto

power: the nation, in selecting such, has only added the efficacious concurrence of affection, and of confidence in the force of royalty; which it regards as its richest domain—as the firmest rampart of public liberty.

"There can only be true power in the union of all the forces of the empire towards a single end; and only durable government where the law maintains in its execution all the energy of the general impulse which formed it. Before, the throne had a deceitful renown; it has now an immutable basis.

"*A mighty tree covers with its shadow a large surface; its roots, deep-stricken, stretch out afar, and intertwine themselves around eternal rocks; to overturn it you must raise an earthquake: such, sire, such is the symbol of royalty in the constitution you have accepted, and which day by day is perfecting and completing itself under your auspices.*

"There is no section of the people that has not its administrators, its judges, its public force, and, so to phrase it, its portion of political life and action. Each of these points is leagued to the supreme executive under different forms; it is ever the same authority which is reproducing itself. It will be indestructible as the elements wherefrom it is formed: heretofore was royalty confined within the circumference of the palace, henceforth shall it cover all the kingdom."

Cannot the reader by this time see, that from the tribune of the Assembly, in private letters and muni-

cipal addresses, there is seen the same constitutional and monarchic spirit, and that alone?

On the 3rd of March, Mirabeau delivered an extremely sensible speech on the subject of savings banks. M. Lafarge had originated the scheme for a bank of this kind, which took his name; and the committee of Finance, and also of Mendicity, proposed its establishment in France, on a sound government basis: which Mirabeau supported; urging very forcibly upon the notice of the people the advantages, the dignity of an old age maintained in independence by the labour and prudence of the days of strength and vigour.

The 22nd and three following days were devoted to the framing of a law concerning the regency; and it was on these days that Mirabeau made his last oration on a fundamental and important subject. There were three heads to be decided upon: 1st, Was the regency to be elective or hereditary? 2nd, In case of its being declared elective—or if not, in case of there being no male relatives of the minor within the hereditary circle—whether the election should be vested in the legislature or an electoral body? 3rd, At what age was the royal minor to be admitted into the councils? On the 22nd, when these topics were first introduced, Mirabeau used all his influence to procure an adjournment; telling them that he wished time for reflection; and that, on such an important topic, reflection was a thing not to be scorned by even the Assembly itself. But the

French possess a singular and striking advantage over other nations, that of being able to legislate without thought; and so the Assembly rejected Mirabeau's advice, and commenced debating on the instant.

There appeared to be a complete confusion of parties on this subject: Barnave and Cazalès, the two antipodes of the Assembly, were seen agreeing on the head of an hereditary regent; and the Abbé Maury and Pétion, the republican mayor of Paris, on that of an elective one: Mirabeau built his opinion upon the example of England, and therefore advocated an elective regent; elected also by the legislature, as with us. He spoke twice very briefly on the 22nd; first, to point out, what the Assembly appeared to be losing sight of, the immense difference between a regent and a king; several speakers having said that, as they had decreed the kingship hereditary, they must also declare the regency.

"Why was the monarchy," asked Mirabeau, "declared hereditary, notwithstanding the incalculable objections to such a form? Simply because the disadvantages attendant on an elective monarchy were, perchance, far greater, and more dangerous to public morality and order. But if these inconveniences are not found in the very circumscribed election of a regent, why seek to avoid them by giving those of the hereditary form? Why take a regent from the hands of chance?" This was not intended as his speech on the subject, but merely to

call the attention of the Assembly to that difference; and, as they were talking discursively on all the three heads at once, to beg of them to turn their attention to the first, and confine their remarks thereto. Barnave, therefore, immediately opened the debate, attacking the opinion Mirabeau had intimated as his. Mirabeau then ascended the tribune to reply; but, commencing again to censure the Assembly for its precipitancy, he was greeted with ironic cheers and murmurs, which he thus glanced at:

"I shall reply, as a man whom the clapping of hands unnerve about as much as murmurs, that I respect weighty objections, and that I even esteem specious ones, since they compel us to look within ourselves, and to reflect."

And again at the conclusion,—

"Ah! never imagine that when a constitution is made, and well made, a great and, above all, durable party can be established by a momentary crisis: rest assured, that in a case of this kind, as in every other, nothing can ever be reaped but that which was sown. While I have been speaking, and was expressing my first ideas upon the regency, I have heard it said, with that precise and charming decisiveness to which I have long been accustomed, *That is absurd; that is extravagant; that is not proposable.* Gentlemen, I declare that in this Assembly, I know some very respectable citizens, and some very enlightened minds, who have great doubts upon the question, and who are about to support the elective

regency. I thence conclude, that the question ought to be stated as being capable of discussion, and that, when any one proposes anything whatsoever, previous to exclaiming, *That is absurd, that is extravagant, that is not proposable,* it is advisable to meditate well: which, in whatever state the question may be, never proves useless!"

On the morrow, Mirabeau stated his ideas at full; bringing forward all the strong and apparent reasons for an elective regency: showing that, having declared the kingship hereditary, because of the popular tumults attendant upon an election, and the consequent disorganization of the kingdom, it would be a wholesome blending of the two principles to decree the regency elective: demonstrating the material difference between a king and a regent, and therefore declaring that "the system of an elective regency recalls to mind at certain epochs the true source of royalty: and it is good that neither kings nor the people forget it. The system of election, therefore, appears to me very suitable, and even plausible; very propitious, however lightly it may have been treated at first sight."

The Assembly decreed that the regency should fall upon the nearest direct heir to the throne, who might have attained his majority. They then discussed numerous other minutiæ, in which Mirabeau took full share; but in a mere conversational manner, sprinkled throughout with those piquant sarcasms, happy retorts, and witty observations, in

which he excelled as eminently as in the more noble and commanding qualities of oratoric sublimity and logical argumentativeness. Brilliant coruscations in the evening, but they could not keep the sun above the horizon—painted light-cloudlets floating, many-coloured, in the heavens; but they cannot hide the grim, impending death-cloud, which the event-seer can detect behind them!

CHAPTER XI.

MIRABEAU'S CONNECTION WITH THE KING AND QUEEN.

May 1790 *to April* 1791.

By the close of 1789, had it become unpleasantly apparent to Mirabeau that the Revolution was going too far, proceeding too ruthlessly, destroying too much: though every atom of his being pealed forth the restraining cry of "Hold, enough!" The giant, disgusted with his castle, had, in confusion and holy wrath, pulled it, remorseless, to the ground. It was a bad edifice, and a rotten, and deserved no other ending; but when, amidst the floating dust, he stood among the ruins, wiping his o'er-heated forehead, the fact, which he had till then overlooked, stood plain before him, that there was now no castle at all: that if he would not dwell upon the bare earth, a prey to noxious reptiles and pestilential vapours, it was necessary to commence rebuilding with the utmost possible despatch. Mirabeau had overthrown absolute monarchy in France: it is not going too far to say that; and, in reality, there was now no king: for all the respect and reverence king-

ship conjures up was wanting. The king which the Assembly had made, with their suspensive vetoes and such like absurdities, was a manifest nullity—expensive and useless: to rectify their errors, to remodel the constitution, and create from the ruins of the absolute monarchy a king, who, while he could not trample upon the liberties of his subjects, lent force unto the executive power, was a rallying point for the nation, and by his splendour and regal magnificence, maintained the nation's dignity to the other European nations; to create, in fact, a free and constitutionally limited monarchy, was the great task Mirabeau now set himself.

But, beyond the fact of there being no adequate regal power, Mirabeau saw, with fear and sorrow, that the force he had had such share in raising, and whose movements he had almost invariably commanded, was carrying its arms too far, and fast becoming unbridled and malicious. We will liken him to a brave general who heads the storming of a city: who leagues good and bad together, as is the custom in an army, to effect its capture; who rushes on, sword in hand, to the battlements, mingling in hand to hand conflict, dealing many well-directed blows, striking many random hits, until he passes through the breach and wins the city; who, when he plants his victory-standard proudly on the walls, beholds with horror that his soldiers, forgetting that moderation and not excess is valour, are giving way to wild excesses: that the old are massacred, the fair

polluted, and that blood runs river-like in the kennels. Precisely so was Mirabeau: had he never lived, the Revolution had never gone farther than a few place-suppressings and reforms of imposts; had he not died when he did, the Revolution had never been the horrible monstrosity it swelled into.

Amid the shoal of misstatements, doubts, and vagueness, the biographer (judging from Mirabeau's speech to Malouet, and other conversations and letters) can assert positively that, almost directly after the opening of the States, Mirabeau saw with instinctive dread the great sans-culottic and anarchic tendency of many of its members; that, as time passed on, and the constitution was being made, a far too republican spirit prevailed in their decrees; that the king was refused a veto, which Mirabeau believed a necessary adjunct to royalty; that, by the end of 1789, or the early part of 1790, the nation and the king were in danger, and that it was his duty to save them both.

But to effect this was a delicate and difficult task: he had offered himself to Necker, and been haughtily repulsed; and was too proud a man to undergo the chance of a second such like insult. Added to which, he was not in good favour with the court: the religious king, having been fed with exaggerated and infamous stories of Mirabeau's debaucheries and general want of principle, had an objection to employ such a one, in his behalf; and Marie Antoinette, feeling Mirabeau's power, and not en-

tertaining the same rigid vice-detesting austerity, refrained still from calling in the man who could alone save them, from a hope of recovering power without him, and revenging herself upon all the revolutionists—Mirabeau at their head. And so for months, like a couple of lovers who love and lack resolution to tell it, they remained asunder; Mirabeau, sensible that sooner or later he must be called in, biding his time with a manly dignity, a proud reserve: every now and then demonstrating to them his boundless genius by some tremendous efforts; and the court, looking hesitatingly and fearingly towards him, and assuring themselves day by day of his monarchic tendency through the Count de Lamarck; until, at length, the time came, and Mirabeau (so say his detractors) *sold himself to the court, and became a traitor!*

To such as may entertain that beautiful theory, that great men are saleable, and that a man like Mirabeau *could* be bought to speak against his soul's convictions—as if his only strength did not lie in his language being heartfelt and impulsive—that may seem a tenable assertion; but how surprising to all such will be the correspondence we are about (for the first time in English) to lay before them. Let them well consider it; for it will show them with what dignity a hero approaches and allies himself to a quondam foe: it will teach what value to place upon such histories as write down a Luther as a sensual scoundrel, performing a reformation for some fleshly

gratification with a nun; a Cromwell, an arch-hypocrite professing Puritanism for personal aggrandisement; a Mirabeau, entering into an awful life-and-death struggle with sans-culottic phrensy, to save his country and his king, for the consideration of a little cash!

With Mirabeau's fiery energy, he united—strange combination!—a business-like regularity and accuracy almost astonishing; and one invariable habit with him was, not only to preserve whatever correspondence he received, but also to retain copies of his own communications.* Hence it is that the *Fils Adoptif* was enabled to present for the first time a complete and connected account of his intercourse with the court: disproving many things, making the misty clear. It is strange how, oft-times, when we are vaunting and asserting in the loudest key, that which would refute it all is close at hand, and speaks not. When one historian was giving this as the date of Mirabeau's alliance being formed, and another denying it, and giving altogether another, varying from 1789 to 1791, how little did they think there lay quietly near the veracious annals of the whole affair.

We mentioned earlier, that in October 1789, Monsieur had applied to Mirabeau for his opinions on the danger royalty was then under; which he furnished and heard no more of. This we do not call

* The Count de Lamarck took copies of the letters to the court, the originals whereof were burnt, Madame Campan surmises, after the 10th of August.

the commencement of his court connection: the application was never made authoritatively, and the document never met with any attention, although well worthy the utmost.* The actual commencement was made in May 1790, or perhaps about the close of April, by the court, at the instigation of the queen, and through the mediation of the Count de Lamarck.† That nobleman, having long been acquainted with Mirabeau's views, had been summoned from Belgium to Paris, for the express purpose of soliciting a communication from Mirabeau: which was accordingly given on the 10th of May, and, in its translated garb, reads thus:—

"Profoundly touched by the anguish of the king, who has not in the least merited his personal misfortunes; persuaded that if there be, in his situation, a prince on whose word it is possible to rely, that prince is Louis XVI.; I am, nevertheless, so armed, by intercourse with men, and by events against that commiseration which the spectacle of human vicissitudes naturally engenders, that I should be immutably repugnant to entering upon a new part in this time of partialities and confusions, *if I were not con-*

* It was in *this* document that Mirabeau advised a flight to Rouen, and armed interference with the anarchic faction. A confusion of documents has therefore led to the erroneous impressions, we are about to expose.

† Auguste Marie Raymond, Count de Lamarck, and since Prince of Arenberg, was a Belgian noble, born at Brussels, who died there in 1833, aged eighty. He was in the most intimate confidence of the queen, and was no less in that of Mirabeau, whose dearest friend he was.

vinced that the re-establishment of the legitimate authority of the king is the greatest want of France, and the only means of saving her.

"But I see clearly that we are in anarchy, and that we are floundering therein deeper day by day: *I am indignant at the bare idea that I should have only contributed to a vast demolition;* and the fear of beholding another than the king at the head of the State, is so insupportable to me, that I feel myself imperiously called to action, at a moment when, almost pledged to the silence of contempt, I only aspired to a retreat.*

"In such a case, it is easy to believe that the present inclinations of a good and unfortunate king—whose counsellors, and also whose misfortunes, cease not to remind him of how much cause of complaint he has against me, and who, nevertheless, has the noble and courageous idea of confiding in me—are an attraction which I shall not essay to resist. Here, therefore, is the profession of faith which the king has desired: he will deign to select its depositary himself; for the rules of prudence will not allow him to preserve them, and this writing will remain for evermore my condemnation or my praise.

"I engage myself to serve the true interests of the king with my whole influence; and, in order that that assertion may not seem vague, *I declare that I believe a counter-revolution to be as dangerous and criminal,*

* This is not a mere flourish. This was written May 10th, and during the whole preceding month he had only spoken three times.

as I find the hope or project of any government in France, without a chief invested with the power necessary for applying all the public force to the execution of the law, to be chimeric.

"Based on these principles, I will give my written opinion upon the course of events, upon the means for directing them; for preventing such as may be foreboded, for remedying such when they have already happened; I shall make it my chief business to put in its place in the Constitution, the executive power; the plenitude whereof should be without restriction or division in the hand of the king.

"I shall require two months to collect, or even, if I may thus speak, to *make* my means: to prepare the minds and convince the reason of those wise citizens necessary to the service of the king. I will have in each department an influential correspondence, and I will give him the results: my march shall be imperceptible, but each day I will make a step. An empiric promises a sudden cure, and kills. A true physician observes, acts, above all, by diet, dose, and measure, and very often cures.

"*I am as profoundly opposed to a counter-revolution as I am to the excesses whereunto the revolution, fallen into the hands of impotent and perverse men, has conducted the populace. It will, therefore, be necessary never to judge my conduct piecemeal, neither by a single act, nor a single speech.* It is not that I refuse to explain any; but they can only be judged collectively, and

have influence collectively: it is impossible to save the State day by day.

"I promise the king loyalty, zeal, activity, and a courage whereof, perhaps, he is far from having an idea: I promise him, in fact, everything except success; which never depends upon a single man, and which it would be a very rash and very culpable presumption to guarantee, in the terrible malady which is undermining the State, and which menaces its chief. He would be a very strange man who would be indifferent and faithless to the glory of saving one or the other; and I am not that man."*

After such a fashion (there being so many hints at salary!) does the great Mirabeau *sell* himself to the court. Nothing could be more straightforward, honest, and frank, than that letter; and when we find that even after its receipt, the court still wavered, still withheld its full confidence, and instead of boldly giving him the reins, merely engaged him, as it were, for the last stage, the ultimate fate of unfortunate royalty appears the natural end. When a king has neither the faculty for driving his nation-steed, nor the insight to discover who among his people has that faculty; or rather, if, having discovered such a one, he only accord him one rein, and keeps, himself, insanely jerking at the other; a general overturn is all he can expect. Louis very evidently had little idea of what a man Mirabeau was. His queen, better gifted with the qualities of the mind,

* Fils Adop. vii. 366.

and having a shrewd insight into character, clearly understood him, appreciated his intellect, his daring, to the full; but her vehement thirst for a counter-revolution led her to wish to postpone, as long as possible, a firm closing with the consolidation plans of Mirabeau.

On the 13th, he addressed another short note,* and on the 20th, spoke in favour of the king declaring peace or war. And a little later on in the month he had his first interview with the queen; than which there is nothing more interestingly picturesque: it is the sublime of the romantic.

It was in the calm of a May evening that Mirabeau mounted his horse and rode westward, ostensibly to Clavière's country-house; but when out of observation he suddenly changed his course, and turned towards St. Cloud. At one of the private entrances, a person waited to hold his horse, to give him admission to the garden. That garden is covered with small hillocks; but in the centre rises, shrub-clad, a greater knoll, eminent above the others. Why, as Mirabeau strode thitherward, did his breast swell proudly and his eye dilate? Because that knoll was "crowned with a peculiar diadem:" because thereon, alone (maids waiting in the distance), in all her excessive loveliness and imperial beauty, there stood the queen of France; and his eye dilated

* Notes whereof we only mention the dates, must be understood to be unimportant or unobtainable.

with rapture, and his breast swelled with pride, to think that his genius had at length achieved so much: that at last it had come to *that*. The queen, too; was she unmoved? Or might there not even steal a little fear-flutter through that heroic bosom? *He* was coming—the man of all men: the man who had overturned the monarchy; the man who had ruled the nation so grandly; the man she knew not whether to hate or love, with his commanding form erect, and his long locks floating to the breeze, was striding towards her! She expected to find a coarse, debauch-eaten, rough-hewn, strong, but very brute-like man; and she found, the most insinuating, the most fascinating, the most perfect gentleman in France.

"With a foe of ordinary capacity," said the queen, "with an every-day enemy, I should now be guilty of a very foolish, a very injudicious step: but with a MIRABEAU!—"

And so she has acknowledged their equality: and King Mirabeau, and Queen Antoinette discourse together. What that discourse was, no man knows; no man, to the end of time, ever shall know: that there ever was, or ever will be, a conversation holden on this earth one would more desire to know, is dubious. We do know, however, that for a considerable space they spoke together: that as they were separating, Mirabeau exclaimed,—

"Madame, whenever your illustrious mother, Maria Theresa, honoured one of her loyal subjects

with an interview, she never suffered them to depart without according to them her royal hand."

The queen, with a queen's grace, held forth her hand; Mirabeau, with a king's dignified elegance, knelt and fervently kissed it: that kiss shot strength through his frame, and starting to his feet he cried, with native self-confidence,—

"*Madame, the monarchy is saved!*"

And so they parted.* Was it wonderful that Mirabeau should hurry from the garden, and leaping upon his waiting steed, like the wild-huntsman in the ballad, ride impetuously home?—wonderful that, inspired by her beauty, her misfortunes, her queenly soul, strange chivalrous fancies ran riot in his brain; and that his imagination, piercing into the future, painted that which might be, thus?—an upstart and disloyal assembly dispersed and scattered—if needs be, by the cannon's voice; a wretched Jacobin-club, and blood-thirsty Marats, trampled down into their native mud, and the royal standard —the standard of the old Bourbons, of Henri, of Francis, of the good king Louis—once more unfurled; unfurled, and not now as a rallying point for aristocrats and baronial oppressors, but as the symbol of constitutional order and freedom, in opposition to anarchy and mob-tyranny; and with drums beating, colours flying, the loyalty of France, charging, lion-hearted, to the conflict. Amid all which war-thunders, amid the clash of sabres and the roar

* *Vide* Campan, Weber, &c.

of artillery, one form to stand forth pre-eminently notable, showing distant generations how a Mirabeau does battle for his king and for his country!

That such a dream did dwell for a short space in Mirabeau's mind, we have written evidence; for shortly after he writes to the queen:—"The moment may come when it will be necessary to see, that which we may see, *on horse-back, a woman and an infant:* these are family traditions familiar to the queen;"* hinting, or appearing to imply, the laying aside of the very good, but very useless king, and the elevation of the Dauphin.

A reciprocal admiration and esteem, highly creditable to both, was established between the twain by this interview: Marie Antoinette told Madame Campan, she was *delighted* with Mirabeau; and Mirabeau said forcibly to Dumont, with his own peculiar point, "She is the only *man* the king has about him." But on the queen's part, the admiration went little beyond enthusiastic speeches; and although another interview took place (the date whereof, period, and result are unknown), and though Mirabeau addressed his letters ever after almost exclusively to her; she never gave his plans that impetus she alone could have done. We have not scrupled earlier on, to express our conviction of the queen having been much overrated for energy and decision: she has generally been painted as one who would have saved France; have taken bold decisive

* Fils Adop. viii. 93.

measures, had not the king's imbecility defeated her purposes; whereas, no one instance can ever be adduced of the queen planning, or even advocating, any practicable scheme: and it is certain, had she lent her whole influence to the adoption of Mirabeau's designs, they would have been adopted long before his death, and the monarchy, if not saved, snuffed out at least with regal honours. The cause lost no more by the tender-hearted compunctions of the good Louis, nor as much, as it did by the faithlessness of the queen; her revengeful disposition, her shallow and intricate scheming: for she plotted with everybody, and she closed with none.

If, in reading the earlier volumes of the *Fils Adoptif*, the soul of the peruser sank into somnolency and disgust at the endless insertion of trash, and of documents known to the whole world; how much more disgusted must he grow on reaching the eighth, to find that, to make room for the old marquis's crazy letters, his son's correspondence with the court is cut down into a bare and exceedingly vague analysis. Orations procurable everywhere—in the *Moniteur*, *Histoire Parliamentaire*, and a shoal of other publications—he inserts in full; letters procurable nowhere he analyzes, glances at, or omits entirely: nay, beyond that, he does not even analyze connectedly, but dovetails you a page or two of court correspondence between fifties of debates. From the unlikeliest corners, from insignificant notes, has this correspondence to be gleaned; and if, therefore,

after all gleaning, there be a little incompleteness, the fault rests at M. Montigny's door, not at ours.

Mirabeau's notes were all on passing events; containing warning, reproof, or advice: and are always replete with sagacity and penetration. On June 1st, 6th, 20th, 28th, he despatched billets to the queen, chiefly upon Lafayette; whom he blames, as justly as severely, for not having used the National Guard as an immense constitutional force, but as simply the puppets of his own stage-displays. His analysis of Lafayette's character is most accurate. "He is not so great," Mirabeau says, "as singular; his character more fussy, than actually strong; a generous man, but romantic and chimeric, living in illusions."

On the 3rd, 7th, and 9th of July were notes sent; and on the 17th, three days after the celebrated Federation, he wrote another; animadverting severely on Lafayette's conduct thereat. He complains that instead of the king being the prominent person at the Federation, he only "contemplated at a respectful distance the royalty of Lafayette." He, moreover, blames Lafayette, in several other notes, for having been the sole cause of the king's imprisonment in Paris: by not having directed his force more resolutely to the suppression of popular tumult.

At the close of July, he endeavoured to elevate the spirits of the king, by pointing out one or two good signs: among others, the coming re-election of the constitutionalist Bailli to the mayorship of Paris. And about the same time he fiercely denounced the

emigrants; showing that they, in fact, were the king's worst enemies. He conjures the king to disavow them; telling the monarch, what he found out bitterly afterwards, that the people would not always distinguish between the mild king and his mad supporters; but that he would have to suffer for their folly and insanity. In this opinion the queen fully joined: in her letters to her brother Leopold, she expresses frequently her contempt for the emigrants; even going so far as to say, "You yourself know the bad purposes and bad resolutions of the emigrants. The poltroons (*les laches*), after having deserted us, wish to require that we alone should expose ourselves, and we alone serve their interests. I do not accuse the brothers of the king; I believe their hearts and their intentions to be pure: but they are surrounded and led by ambitious persons, who will ruin them, after having first ruined us."*

From August 13th to September 29th, Mirabeau addressed ten letters to the king or queen: chiefly to the latter: in which we find his plans beginning to peep out, though in generalities, for the most part. He strenuously presses on the queen to retain and strengthen her influence over the king; for he does not conceal from her, that it is to her, and her alone, he looks for success. It is in one of those letters that the before-quoted chivalrous battle-hint is found. He devotes much space to execrating any design for

* Letter of Marie Antoinette to the Emperor Leopold; *Revue Retrospective*, 2nd series, No. iii. 465; and Fils Adop. viii. 360.

restoring the old system; stating that whatever is to be done, must be transacted on the broadest and most liberal basis. The Constitution wants revision, he says, and the anarchists suppressing: nothing more; and the burden of his advice is, that the queen should stir up her lethargic husband to action: to a manly, free, and open conciliation of the people; to win the love, not so much of Paris, as of the departments: they being much less revolutionary, and far more loyal.

In the month of October, nine letters passed from Mirabeau to the court; most of them discursive observations of the same purport as the former: these, however, in the earlier part of the month were on a particular event. We mentioned in our legislative details, the navy having retained the white standard instead of the tricolor: this was done by order of the ministers; and the revolt of the soldiers at Nancy, so well put down by Bouillé, having occurred only a little time previous, the populace were exasperated, and the clubs, to the number of fifty thousand men, tumultuously demanded that the Assembly should impeach the ministers. In this juncture, Louis, who had a Mirabeau to consult, preferred taking the advice of M. de Bergasse (a superstitious enthusiastic follower of Mesmer's mummeries); which was, that, to conciliate the people, the king should ask the Assembly to select him other ministers! This design reaching Mirabeau, he forwarded a very angry letter to the

queen, telling her that, though conciliation was good, such a conciliation was madness; being the establishment of a dangerous precedent, which the Assembly would be only too glad to seize: that, though the ministers were imbecile and unpopular, such a step was not called for; the king wanting more influence, and not having any privileges at all to sacrifice. When the Assembly refused to solicit the dismissal of the ministers, Mirabeau addressed another note on the 22nd, calling upon the king to publish a distinct denial of having had any share in the prohibition of the tricolor.

On November 12th and 17th, December 6th, 15th, 20th, and 27th,* letters were sent to the queen, commenting, as usual, upon the events of the day, and their probable results. He shows his intimate acquaintance with all the popular leaders' views; denouncing Lameth and Duport, Petion and Barnave: the last three whereof, he says, "are pushing for a republic." He deplores the height to which freedom of the press had reached, when no libel, however disgraceful, could be punished; no paper, however seditious, suppressed: the daily increasing might of

* In this note of the 27th, we find him pleading with the queen to admit M. de Montmorin into their councils; that gentleman having begged Mirabeau so to do. A striking example of how Time does justice unto all: precisely two years before, Mirabeau had been applying to that very Montmorin for means of sustenance, well nigh meeting with silent refusals; and now, the little Pagod has fallen, and the Great Man is exalted: and the treatment of the applicant differs with the change.

the sans-culottic faction, the daily decreasing power of the constituted authorities. Such is the general tenor of all his notes: rigidly plain when addressed to the king; energetically eloquent, free-spoken, and forcible, when written to the queen.

But Mirabeau could do something better than deplore the impending and expanding thundercloud: he could devise methods for frustrating its end, for defying its force. Pursuant to his first letter to the king, he had been instituting an extended departmental correspondence—a kind of under government, whereof the chief seat was at his house, the sole minister and conductor was himself. All over France he had trustworthy men, taking, as it were, the sense of the people; and having, towards the close of the year, attained to an accurate knowledge of the spirit of the nation, he developed his opinions at full, in a very long memorial forwarded to the queen about the 30th December. Of this most interesting and important document, we give a succinct analysis.

He commences by pointing out that a systematic plan, adopted sincerely and never departed from, could alone succeed. With that view, he lays before the Queen, the principal obstacles to the wellbeing of the nation; giving at the same time, the means for overturning them.

1st. *There is the indecision of the king.* The worst of dangers; but the queen must fix and lead him.

2nd. *The prejudices against the queen.* This unde-

served unpopularity must be removed by popular conduct. The queen must show herself oftener; visit unostentatiously the hospitals, workshops, public places, &c., and demean herself with unchanging affability.

3rd. *The phrenetic anarchy of Paris.* Paris he paints most truly, as the veriest pandemonium upon earth. Everything bad, corrupt, disloyal, incendiary, and damnable, he says, is rampant there. In Paris, there could be no hope: "it will be the last city where order and peace are re-established." To obviate this, the most must be made of the good spirit of the departments; and when a new assembly be elected, it would perhaps be as well that they should, to avoid mob-rule and gain free debate, meet elsewhere than at Paris.

4th. *The National Guard.* This he esteems a nuisance. Too large a body to have any likelihood of being aroused to an unanimous loyal *esprit de corps;* too much *of* the people to resist them; strong enough to be a barrier to royalty, but not strong enough to put down an insurrection. As a counterpoise to this, the standing army must be augmented, and rendered popular by the discharge of foreign troops; and a trustworthy legion of king's guard raised by popular election in the departments.

5th. *The irritability of the Assembly.* The only way to manage the Assembly is, not to provoke it: to restrain the unbridled and tempestuous attacks of the *ancien régimists;* to let it alone, in order that it

may cut its own throat, which it will do; never to interfere with it, however wrongly it may act, but to let it go astray as much as it likes; and, above all, that the policy of the king be always to be in the right: the true war to be waged is, "*ever to act rightly!*"

He then branches off into general but note-worthy observations to this effect. It is as useless as perilous to attempt to *direct* the Assembly, as it will not be directed. Lafayette must be opposed in his proposition "that the constitution, as framed by the Assembly, be conclusive, and unalterable; any future decrees being merely regulatory." This proposition must be opposed, because a constitution made precipitately must be full of faults.

To win over the malcontents in a body is impossible: they may be won, however, by units. But party spirit is so high, that in the excitement of the people is the chief danger. To qualify this, the royal authority must be placed in its proper pre-eminence. It not being so placed is the error of the constitution; which he calls a confused mixture of democracy, aristocracy and monarchy. How must the royal authority, then, be augmented? Not by a counter-revolution certainly: a retrograde movement would be criminal and ridiculous, and have no chance of success. What has been achieved must remain inviolable; we must "*go forward to a better constitution.*"

What, therefore, are the errors of the present

constitution? Not the abolition of privileges, the tearing down of abuses, the destruction of feudality, the equalization of taxes: all these are good. The evils are, first, the overthrow of the royal power; when it was only necessary *wisely to limit it:* Secondly, *the exaggerated idea of the people; who should have been rendered free, not sovereign.*

Such are the merits and the errors: the former we must religiously preserve, the latter root out; not superficially, but by the very roots. But how to do that? The methods are twofold: first, by the existing Assembly; secondly, by a new one.

1st. *By the existing Assembly.* To consider whether the reform should be effected by that, it will be necessary to redivide the question into two more heads, viz. What we want to obtain; and, What we may expect to obtain. If we want merely palliatives, the Assembly would grant them: but we should thereby gain nothing; fundamentals being our great requirement. What, then, may we expect from the existing Assembly? Nothing whatever. It is composed of too jarring elements ever to be of benefit; is too self-possessed, too much in love with its own edicts, ever radically to reform them; and, therefore, we must conclude that the second method is our true resource: namely, a new Assembly.

How to render that Assembly loyal, and devoted to our cause? The means for effecting that are threefold:—

1st. We could propose a date for dissolution;

propose, also, that no deputy can be re-elected to the new Assembly:* which would pass; or, in case it did not, we could propose that no person could sit for any other department than his native one. This would be a master-stroke; for, while Danton, Marat, Desmoulins, Robespierre, &c., would never be elected for their own native departments, Paris would elect them all. By either of these means we should have the most factious removed; and by influencing the rural and departmental elections, which we could do greatly, we should have the majority of the new Assembly on our side.

2ndly. By gaining over the leaders of the present Assembly, who might thus hasten its termination, and influence the new Assembly. This might easily be done, by promises of ministerial situations, &c. &c.

3rdly. To bring the existing Assembly into discredit, and so increase the royal influence. The effecting thereof would be comparatively easy. Among many other little ways of so doing, we could allow them to pass all such decrees as gave increased privileges to Paris, and destroyed those of the other districts; thereby raising jealousy between town and town. We could get petitions forwarded, such as we foresaw would be rejected; "we would never contra-

* This would have been an heroic self-sacrifice truly for Mirabeau. He sees that; and in proposing it, says, "Ah! that I should be reduced to such an excess of evil! *But what imports glory to me, if the State be perishing?*"

dict its tendency to grow dull and stupid over minute details; we could cause popular measures to be proposed by the minority: not by the aristocrats, but by the moderate and wise; prolong the session till the abuses of the new judicial order and the difficulty of assessing the taxes, were more generally known; to let them be plainly told every day of the difficulty of executing their laws, and to beg them to explain their meaning. Let war be made, by collecting and incessantly reporting plain and incontestible facts (they abound everywhere), the evidence whereof goes to demonstrate the inconvenience of the new laws, bad or incoherent, or unintelligible, or inapplicable, which, in the midst of an immense code of laws, leave the kingdom without law; and all this should be made manifest in a very measured manner, very clear, and plain to all intelligences."* Added to all which, nothing must be lost sight of that can render the king and queen popular: they must appear frequently in the public haunts, unostentatiously, and on foot. They must attend reviews, walk unceremoniously now and then to the Assembly, visit all hospitals, and scatter gold liberally in alms and donations; and, above all, act as frank and sincere friends of the new régime.

Such, and such only, were Mirabeau's plans for saving the monarchy: and thereby we discover that the pretty tale which history has so long been telling,

* This is translated from the Fils Adoptif's analysis, and not from the *Mémoire* at full.

about a removal of the king to Compiègne, and a forcible dispersion of the Assembly by Bouillé, is all an error; grown out of Louis mixing his own stupid plans with Mirabeau's sensibler designs. To us this veracious plan seems far more beautiful and feasible than the other fictitious one: for that was an arming of Frenchmen against Frenchmen, a declaration of civil war; while this was to conquer the hearts of France, not by steel, but by "*always acting right*:" by doing good; not by tyranny, but by liberty and love; and so more beautiful. More feasible, because none can doubt the feasibility of the true plan, when he looks at the great and lingering love entertained for Louis till his very death; despite the Varennes flight, and numerous other absurdities and perfidies, which, had Mirabeau lived and his plan been adopted, had never been enacted: to be added whereunto there is the influence and popularity of Mirabeau, and his prescient, all-seeing, all-directing genius. Whereas the other was most hazardous; for Paris, with her tens of thousands of bastillers and cordeliers, the fiery denizens of St. Antoine, and her numerous corps of National Guard, would never have permitted her Assembly to be dispersed by Bouillé without a struggle: a struggle to be taken up by Lyons, by Aix, by Marseilles, and other towns, until the whole kingdom was a battle-field.

However,—beautiful or not beautiful, feasible or not feasible,—such was his matured and deliberated

scheme: a scheme too energetic for the king, too moderate for the queen. On the 30th of December, Mirabeau sent them that plain-spoken, that most practicable advice; and between it and his death, four notes urging upon them to adopt it; or if not *it*, something else reasonable: but, above all, to adopt something—to act. But it was all in vain: Louis could not bring his mind to think that action as yet was imperatively necessary; and Marie Antoinette could not conclude *how* to act: as he said, they only gave him a kind of "half confidence." While his immense plan was revolving on its noble constitutional axis, the queen and king had innumerable little arbitrary wheels spinning, with an inverse motion, in its interior. The bewildered pair, weathercock-like, turned unfixed to every azimuth, alternately: now blown by the strong Boreas-blast of a Mirabeau, now moved by the little puffs of some de Moleville or Bergasse; until, when the time came that the floods closed on them, they found that rock whereon they could have based themselves was vanished for ever: and so in their despair they clutched at straws, and were speedily engulphed!

A word or two, ere closing the subject, about the monies received by Mirabeau; the magnitude whereof has been much extended. That he received any, cannot be clearly proved: but we are not disposed to go so far as to deny the fact. The Prince of Arenberg (de Lamarck), who transacted all the verbal correspon-

dence between the queen and Mirabeau, stated that the sole monetary connection was, that the king paid debts of Mirabeau's amounting to £3,200, and also deposited in the hands of three gentlemen four notes of hand for £10,000 each, payable upon certain contingencies: all of which were returned to the king, intact, after Mirabeau's demise. Beyond this the king assigned him, about the close of 1790, a monthly stipend of £250: but there is every reason to suppose that this was never (if at all) regularly paid; since, on the 2d of March, exactly a month before Mirabeau's death, we find Laporte, superintendent of the civil list, *asking the king for orders to pay Mirabeau, and from what particular fund to pay him:* which certainly does not appear as though a regular allowance had been established. But the greatest contradiction to the statements of Mirabeau's court salary, is his utter insolvency at his death: he left behind him debts amply sufficient to account for all his expenditure; even according to the highest and most exaggerated estimates thereof.

The saying of "The world knows nothing of its greatest men," taken in its intended sense, is false: there never yet came a great man on this world that did not start up with innate, God-implanted energy, and inscribe his name in fire-characters upon the mighty scroll of Time: taken in the sense of the world being ignorant of the actual workings of its greatest men, it is most true. The great man in his

life-time, and for some years after, is as a distant mountain in the dim morning; we cannot clearly see its form, altitude, and beauties, till the sun (say of investigation) arises, and the mists (of party-spirited ignorance) disperse!

CHAPTER XII.

MIRABEAU'S PRIVATE LIFE.

1789, 1790, 1791.

WHILE Mirabeau's public and oratoric career has grown daily more and more glaringly distinguishable and admirable; precisely in a like proportion has his private life become obscurer and less traceable: and very often lamentable when traced. What, during the splendid legislative triumph we have just been narrating, the man as an individual and private personage was doing, has to be collected from many quarters; and is but incomplete after all.

On the first opening of the States, Mirabeau resided in lodgings in Versailles; and, for the most part, was considered a suspected and dangerous character, inadmissible into the *réunions* of good society. His male friends, however, were many; for none could resist his insinuating manners and hearty cordiality. Dumont, Duroverai, Clavière, and others, were his daily companions; and to them he delegated the compilation of his tedious and barren

newspaper duties, reserving the "leaders" generally for himself. On Mirabeau's paper, Dumont and company may be said to have lived; for Mirabeau lavished anything his genius could procure on all around him, with the generous liberality of a Timon. The Count de Lamarck was also his friend at this period, and was perhaps the most respectable of his acquaintance; which, it is hardly going too far to state, was confined to males, as far as respectability was concerned. For the downward tendency of Mirabeau's amorous inclinations manifested itself at this time, by his ceasing to have any further intimate connection with the lady-like and beautiful Madame de Nehra; whom he discarded from the post of mistress, to take a low and sensual woman in her stead. A firm and mutual friendship still existed between him and Madame de Nehra, with whom he regularly corresponded, and who was the second party named in his will. His new mistress was the wife of the printer of his paper, one Madame le Jay, a voluptuous and designing woman, who contrived to rob him of his paper's profits, and to make herself master of his secrets; thereby holding him in a moral, or let us say *im*moral thraldom.

To describe him at the opening of the States as a man loved by every man, but not respected; an adventurer, with no *visiting* acquaintance, no family friends; debarred from every coterie his birth entitled him to enter: in fact, to describe him as a

repulsed and isolated individual, will be about correct.

But after a few debates, more especially after his famous reply to de Brézé, the whole scene was changed: every saloon, boudoir, and coterie was flung open to him; and where his presence was before deemed profanation and disgrace, it was now solicited, prayed for, as a glory and an honour. It is not exceeding the bounds of truth to assert, that by the time of the Assembly's removal to Paris, in October 1789, he knew everybody. With the exception of a few ultra-royalists, there was no man in Paris, notable by birth, or more especially by talent, with whom Mirabeau was not intimate — intimate after his own peculiar fashion, with a huge genial heartiness. Dumont and company still hung around him, but they were eclipsed by others. Lamarck, Condorcet, Barnave, Cazalès, Danton, Desmoulins, Laclos, Sillery, Sièyes, Montmorin, Madame de Staël, and numerous other notabilities the human memory cannot retain, were either his daily companions or casual intimates; for, from the roughest democrat to the most polished courtite, all men were his friends. The man at whom so many stones of super-moral scorn have been cast, conscious of infirmity, could see the jewel glittering through the mud, and repulsed none. With Talleyrand alone he was not intimate, for reasons before explained: though there have been no lack of writers who have classed them together as inseparable brother debauchees.

But amid this maze of acquaintances, the never-varying love Mirabeau bore to all his relatives is most affecting. We have before mentioned the love Mirabeau bore his stern old father; whom, urgent as filial love is, he might have hated almost without sin. The same love extended to the bailli; to whom he paid unremitting attention, even amid the thickest of his political conflicts. The same sentiment manifested itself to his brother, the viscount. That furious aristocrat made himself notorious in the Assembly, by his coarse, incessant, and acrimonious attacks upon his more liberal brother, and would not desist therefrom; although the old marquis, who, nevertheless, held the viscount's political views, sent him this reproof: "When a man has a brother like you in the States-General, and he himself is like you, he should leave his brother to speak, and himself keep silence." The good bailli was frightened that the viscount's sarcasms and insults would cause a rupture between the brothers, and wrote to Mirabeau urging him not to permit public disputes to interfere with family affection. Mirabeau replied, "No diversity of opinion shall diminish or weaken the affection I entertain for the second nephew of my uncle;" and, though much provoked, he kept his word: never even giving a retort to his brother's attacks. The Barrel Mirabeau was not short of appreciation for his brother's genius, however: one evening he rolled up the passage at the court, leading to the presence chamber, and the usher mistaking him, threw open

the door, exclaiming, "Monsieur!" "No!" cried the viscount, correcting him, "not Monsieur the brother of the king, but Monsieur brother of King Mirabeau." He was an excessive and habitual drinker, and being reproached therefor replied, "It is the only vice my brother has left me." Mirabeau, however, at times gave him a dry cut, saying once, "Were he any other than *my* brother, he would be deemed a blackguard." Mirabeau's warm and unchanging affection for his sister, Madame du Saillant, is notorious: never was it suffered once to cool or vary; and now that she had children that attachment extended to them. He was a daily visitor at his sister's house, and also at his niece's, the Marchioness of Arragon, at Passy. It was there he used to meet Cazalès; with whom he generally engaged in argument, though in perfect friendliness, and when interrupted by the ladies' advent, they would say to each other, "we will resume it in the Assembly." Such friendship is honourable to both.

Mirabeau received a very slight income by his father's death; which occurring a little before the removal to Paris, when the latter event took place, Mirabeau opened that hotel which has given rise to so many misstatements as to its magnificence and extent. It was in the Chaussée d'Antin, then at the outskirts of Paris, not far from the Tuilleries, and in the Faubourg St. Honoré. It was elegant, no doubt; but a visit will demonstrate the falsity of the generality of accounts thereof. It is the house numbered

forty-two: he rented it from one Julie Carreau, who afterwards married the actor Talma, and the sum he paid was £100 a-year; which of itself goes far to prove how magnificent an hotel it was. Here he resided to his death, with his adopted son and secretaries; these were, as usual, the recipients of his generosity, and his devoted admirers. M. Pellenc, whom Dumont very ignorantly libels, was the young advocate who furnished him with opinions in his law-suit with the countess, anonymously; another was M. de Bourges, who, as we said, followed him from his Pontarlier triumph; and M. de Comps was the son of respectable parents in Provence, who, having been much reduced, Mirabeau undertook to support the son: which he did.

Mirabeau's private habits have been very grossly misrepresented. To judge from the ordinary description, one would imagine him to have been an inordinate beast in every sense. Nothing, however, is farther from the truth: with a Herculean frame, his physician tells us, he united the nerves of a delicate woman.* His taste in eating was extremely refined, and even Dumont bears witness to the moderation of his appetite; as, indeed, also to his temperance: he drank very lightly indeed, and was never seen in the least intoxicated. His great passion was for flowers: every Saturday evening, with invariable regularity, he went down to Argenteuil, to spend

* *Journal de la Maladie et de la Mort de H. G. Riqueti Mirabeau*, par P. J. G. Cabanis: 251.

the Sunday in his gardens, and the surrounding orchards and meadows. The revolutionary giant retiring weekly from the distraction of the capital to calm, rural solitude and tranquillity, is a very touching incident; and very important: for it is by little traits like that, that the character is truly read. The man who withdraws away from popular applause and triumphs, to spend his Sabbath in rustic sauntering by murmuring brooks, beneath overhanging tree-festoons, drinking in the silver bird-music and the soothing repose of nature, cannot be other—how vice-stained soever he may be—than radically a good man.

In his study, too, his love for flowers did not leave him: his window looked upon a small garden filled with flowers, and bouquets surrounded him as he wrote. Every one of his friends bears testimony to his unflagging industry, and his regular and business-like habits. "Had I not lived with him, I should never have had any idea of what a man may make of a single day; what business may be transacted in the space of twelve hours. A day for this man was as much as a week or a month for another.* The secret of which is, the decision of his character: he did not hesitate about a thing, but looking clearly into it, decided upon it, and then did it, with no delay whatsoever.

No less marked a feature in his character was his indifference to popular plaudits. He always avoided

* Dumont, p. 311.

the crowded terraces and walks, and returned home from the Assembly in his carriage by the more retired streets: he occupied a private box at the various theatres, to avoid being discovered by the audience. Once, and once only that we have account of, did he show himself to the people at the theatre; and that was to inculcate a constitutional lesson. It was at the Theatre-Français, when "Brutus" was being performed. The audience caught a glimpse of him in his secluded box, and Camille Desmoulins was despatched to beg him to show himself, and descend into the amphitheatre. For a very long time he refused, and then at last consented, entering the lower circle among the most deafening cheers. But the object of his consent was soon apparent; for when the actor came to this passage—

> Et faire encore fleurir la liberté publique,
> Sous l'ombrage sacré du pouvoir monarchique.
>
> And make the public freedom prosper still,
> Beneath the shade of the monarchic power:

Mirabeau stood up, and by so doing gave the signal for the applauses of the house. With this exception, Mirabeau never pandered in any way to the fête-seeing, demonstration-loving appetite so rampant among his nation.

But if this was a strong quality in Mirabeau, his love of praise—nay, call it vanity—was a weak one. He was very susceptible to praise, and liked, above all, to excite a wondering fear: he was gratified when Desmoulins told him that, if the court had not given

him a hundred thousand crowns for his speech that day, he was underpaid; and he chuckled at the horror manifested by Lafayette when he exclaimed in mock majesty, "Shall we behead the queen?" which the foolish general understood as spoken in earnest. But he was chiefly vain of his herculean frame, and also of his very ugliness; and thought, very likely, more of being a count and having such a commanding stature, than of being the greatest modern oratoric genius. The solution of which may be, that he was proud of the former, but *relied* upon the latter.

In his private life he manifested more fully that dry wit whereof he not unfrequently gave specimens from the tribune; and of which we subjoin a specimen or two, well-known, but worthy repetition.

"Dull as *to-day's* debate," cried one, by way of a simile. "*Pourquoi dater?* why specify to-day?" responded Mirabeau.

"I am sold, but not paid," said the courtier Rivarol. "I am paid, but not sold!" was the response of Mirabeau.

A lady wrote to him for his portrait. "Imagine, madam," was his answer, "a tiger marked with the smallpox, and you have it."

Walking one day with Sièyes on the Feuillans' terrace, the people cried, "*Vive l'Hercule de la liberté!*" "*Voila* Thèse!"* cried Mirabeau, pointing to his diminutive companion.

In another strain we have his famous reply to de

* Behold Theseus.

Comps, his secretary, when he told him something was "impossible." "Impossible!" cried he, jumping from his chair, "never name to me that blockhead of a word." Characteristic, too, is his defiance of the legislature, in retaining his name and title after they had been abolished. He was looking over one of the reporters shortly after that decree was passed, and seeing him write him, "*M. Riqueti l'aîné,*" burst out violently, "With your M. Riqueti you have set France puzzling for these three weeks!"

Once he headed a deputation to the palace; and it having been the custom of the ushers to vent the court-spite against the Assembly by making its deputations wait in the anti-chamber for a considerable space before announcing them, Mirabeau determined to put a stop thereto; and so, when the man in office showed no signs of an immediate announcement, thus addressed him, "Sir, *I order you* to go and tell the king that a deputation of the representatives of the French people is here." And the man went upon the instant: for there was that in Mirabeau's countenance at such seasons which compelled obedience.

Among other marks of affection, Mirabeau received repeated challenges; to which he always returned this invariable answer: "Sir, your favour has been received, and your name is on my list; but I warn you that the list is long, and that I grant no preferences!"

His penetration into character, and the happiness

of his descriptions thereof, are proverbial. Duport, Barnave, and A. de Lameth, he called, parodying the triumvirate, *triumgueusat*, which may be rendered triumvillainate: and if this appear a little harsh as regards Barnave, as regards the former anarchist, and the last (who, having been educated at the queen's cost, returned her bounty by slandering and ruining her), its applicability will not be questioned. Not alone to the well-known men had his inquiries extended: into the crouching felinity of Robespierre, then hardly known, he had peered; and his conclusion has been often quoted, "That man will go far: he believes everything he says."

From the very commencement of 1790 had Mirabeau's constitution been breaking up: he was subject to constantly-recurring attacks of ophthalmia, attended with fever, and by the autumn he was much changed in appearance and complexion. The tenure of his life was growing very uncertain; and yet, when nature thus pealed forth her warning, as if in proud defiance of death, he set at nought the very vital principles of existence, as if determined to test their utmost limits. As we have seen, he undertook the championship of royalty, and commenced establishing—himself alone, unaided—what most men would have deemed more than sufficient employment, his secret correspondence between himself and his agents in every department of France. His diligence in attending the Assembly's debates

about this time was resumed; and on the 30th of November he accepted the presidency of the Jacobins' club. He seized the opportunity this appointment afforded him to ascertain the real feeling of that association, and risked his whole influence by endeavouring to smother that spirit of fierce, terrorial republicanism, then commencing to be visible among them. He had at an earlier period expressed his fear of that club, and he now experienced that those fears were well founded. A few days after his election to the presidency he attended a meeting, and Robespierre speaking palpable incendiarism, he silenced him in his capacity of president. But Robespierre appealed to his audience, and that audience was with him; for the room re-echoed with cries of "Continue"—"Go on," and other such encouragements; and when Mirabeau, determined to gain a clear knowledge of how far imbued the club was with the new principles, stood up and cried, "Let my friends surround me!" he found himself well nigh isolated: the sympathies of the club were with Robespierre. It was by such arduous and bold experiments as this that he amassed his knowledge of the state of Paris, and the dangers of the constitution.

But his greatest and most daring exploit with the Jacobins was on the 28th of February, after he had silenced Robespierre and the Lamethis in the Assembly. Sensible that he would be denounced to the people from the tribune of the Jacobins, he

adopted a plan no other than he would have thought of; or, having thought of, had the courage to put into execution. He determined to confront his enemies face to face: to attend the club that very evening, and so "beard the lion in his den."

The hall was crowded to excess, and Duport was addressing a most excited audience; denouncing, in wild and inflammatory language the enemies of the people, without mentioning Mirabeau: but when the speaker intimated, with a glance at him, that "such were not far distant," an outbreak of applause told Mirabeau too plainly in what odour of sanctity he there stood. He, nevertheless, had the audacity to reply in his most sarcastic style, ridiculing by deep-hidden irony the whole association; and then, amid the exasperated roars of the meeting, took his seat among them, by the side of Camille Desmoulins. The poor Camille! whom, while he censured his factious violence and dangerous principles, he admired and loved: even condescending to be present at his wedding. Alexander de Lameth undertook to give utterance to the rage of the Jacobins; which he did hotly enough: unlike Duport, he did not refrain from naming Mirabeau, but denounced him by name to his very face; addressing himself often to him personally; and when he appealed to the meeting to know if any could deny his charges, none would attempt it. While he was speaking, Mirabeau sat with great drops of perspiration coursing down his face! A quarter of an hour before

entering that Jacobins' hall, he had said to his sister, that his end was accomplished: that they would not let him long survive his imperious "*silence aux trente voix!*" and the work of death was even so soon beginning. But Mirabeau, with life, was not to be other than victorious, even when among his bitter foes; and so he ascended the tribune when Lameth vacated it, spoke for a very long time in a torrent of mingled satire, irony, praise, and declamation: spoke, till he made the hall resound with applauses ten times louder than an hour before had been the contrary, and then strode proudly from the place, and never returned thither again any more, for ever.

But even these labours were not enough: he was elected a member of the directory of the department of the Seine; and when all his other accumulation of business inundated him, could not refrain from devoting his time to the consideration of various workmen's wages in the public service; sketching also plans for their reform. Nay, beyond all this, on the 18th of January, he accepted the commandership of the district battalion of the National Guard: accepted it, not merely as a form, but as an office with duties to be performed; among others, to give a grand dinner to his fellow-comrades, which he did in a most sumptuous manner.

Then again, farther still, about the middle of February, six weeks before his death, he must purchase a beautiful rural residence near Argenteuil, called *Le Marais;* which also he must drain, and till,

and generally improve, erecting bowers, and planning avenues and boscages; and better than all that, inquiring into the circumstances of all the poor around, employing such as were able to work, relieving the indigent and the sick: for misfortune never sounded her wail in his hearing and met with no response; the Orpheus music that could ever, in his busiest hour, melt Mirabeau into sympathetic tears, were the distresses and the sorrows of his fellow-man.

But the measure of his miraculous labours is not yet full. During these latter months he launched out into the most unbridled excesses of intrigue and sensual indulgence. At the very period when, beyond all others, his body required rest, and his mind demanded additional strength, he plunged into a round of licentious amours; so extended, so incessant, that it becomes wondrous that his body held out as long as it did, that his intellect did not altogether fail. The discarding of Madame de Nehra was the knell of his love-days. To that time there dwelt in all his connections a firm and ardent love; but with Madame le Jay this did not exist: she held no spiritual influence over him, and his incontinent desires being satisfied as regarded her, and the restraining barriers of continency and constancy having been cast down, he entered into a wholesale connection with women whose names and haunts are undiscoverable: and unworthy notice, if discovered. Mirabeau's incontinence was

known; and in a loose capital like Paris, the shame of a criminal intercourse would be absorbed in the glory of that intercourse being with the mighty orator: wherefore did all manner of women, maidens, wives, and widows, expose their blandishments unto him, if so be that they might lure him into their toils. The actresses at the theatre played to him, the singers at the opera sang to him: and lured he was to unknown liaisons. With the criminal act it unfortunately did not rest either: professional ladies Mirabeau would in no wise touch, and *amateurs* do not resign themselves to a lover for an evening and so have done with it; therefore, there is a kind of love-making, of softening into compliance in the first place, then jealousy is to be guarded against, and you must pacify and keep friendly with them, until they can be cast aside with decency, and a new batch adopted. And as a stereotyped background, there is vixenish Madame le Jay must have a sop, of money or of love, thrown now and then to her, to enforce that most difficult of female virtues, reticence: she having unpleasant secrets. And so the confused picture paints itself, until the biographer recoils with pity and tearful horror; for he finds that, complex and leviathanic as were Mirabeau's political intrigues and travails, his intrigues of the boudoir, his "labours of love," were quite as leviathanic and as complicated.

Those last six months of Mirabeau's life, are they not dreadful? To think that any mortal man

should ever be condemned, and partly self-condemned, to perish by such a frightful self-consumption! Let the reader call to mind what Mirabeau had on hand, and what he was actually transacting in that period, and then ask himself, if world-history presents a parallel? His open, legitimate labour was in the Assembly: here he generally attended once, frequently twice, a day. Then he had to roar down and do battle with the Jacobins; to superintend his battalion of guards; to superintend, also, his country-house, and plan alterations; to visit or entertain his numerous private friends; to conduct his extensive departmental correspondence; to prepare his orations for the Assembly; to compile his elaborate and extended design for the preservation of the monarchy, and address his frequent letters to the queen; and in the evenings, when his mind and body should have been relieved, to attend the theatre, and dissipate the midnight hours, in the licentious orgies of the beautiful and the frail. We might almost say he never slept. It was, as at the last act of a tragedy, when all the gathered force of the company is crowded upon the stage, to give an overwhelming effect as the curtain falls.

But why did he continue this terrible career? Because there was that in him that would not suffer him to abate one iota of his habits or inclinations. The same tempestuous pride that led him to dare to the teeth, and triumph over in their very stronghold, the assembled hatred of Jacobins; the pride that prompted

him to stand up against the onslaught of anarchy and misrule, even at the sacrifice of his popularity and his life; that pride also urged him to defy, in like manner, the irrevocable edicts of nature, and to determine him never, in good or in evil, to pale his fire; but to retain the immensity of his brilliance and of his baseness, his glory and his shame, his virtues and his vices, undiminished to the end!

CHAPTER XIII.

LAST EFFORTS — ILLNESS AND DEATH.

From March 25th to April 2nd, 1791.

THERE is a spirit that, unseen by mortal eye, tracks the path of every man; whose calm and motionless visage is ever nigh, dimly visible, and minatory; and we name the spectre—DEATH! And so, beyond all the whirlpool of Mirabeau's confused life, we can note the pale outline of this spirit standing close at hand, and growing daily clearer as the fires of life are dying out.

For a long time, as we said, Mirabeau had been ailing, but in 1791 he grew rapidly worse. In addition to his old complaint of fever and ophthalmia, he was now afflicted with rheumatism, internal pains, temporary swellings of the limbs, and all the numerous warning cries of an exhausted nature, which, as he steadily refused to heed these warnings, increased with fearful celerity.* In February, as

* Cabanis' *Journal de la Maladie*, &c., p. 238.

president, Dumont saw him bandaged in the evening sitting, to stanch the blood still trickling from the leeches applied after that of the morning; and Mirabeau himself was sensible that he had entered into the vale from whence there is no retracing—that the shadow of the grave was upon him. His parting with Dumont at that period shows this:—

"When we were parting," writes that individual, "he embraced me with an emotion such as I had never seen in him. 'I shall die little by little, my good friend,' said he to me; 'perhaps we shall never see each other more. When I shall be no more, they will know my value. *The evils that I have held back will fall upon all parts of France; that criminal faction which trembles before me will have no longer a bridle.* I have nothing before my eyes but forebodings of misfortune. Ah! my friend, we were right when we wished at the commencement to stop the Commons from declaring themselves the National Assembly: that is the origin of the evil. Since they have achieved that victory, they have not ceased to show themselves unworthy of it. They have sought to govern the king, instead of being governed by him; *but soon neither they nor he will govern: a vile faction will rule over all, and cover France with horrors!*'"*

So much from a systematic detractor is a glorious tribute; but it is more as a manifestation of his

* Dumont, p. 267.

consciousness of approaching death, than as a wonder-exciting instance of prophetic power, that we cite it. His sister grew alarmed; more especially as she deemed he had not a sufficiently experienced medical adviser. He had, till two years previously, been attended by a celebrated physician, named Dr. Baignères, who, from long attendance and natural skill, had acquired a perfect knowledge of his system. With this gentleman he had unfortunately quarrelled, and now gave himself over to the exclusive care of a young literary surgeon, M. Cabanis; more noted as a scholar, poet, and man of letters, than as a sound practitioner. Madame du Saillant used all her influence to induce him to recall Dr. Baignères, as also did Madame de Nehra; whose solicitude was unaltered by their parting: but it was all in vain; Mirabeau clung confidingly to Cabanis, and the tide of fate flowed on.

In the middle of March, a vast acceleration was given to his end by an imprudent deviation from his accustomed moderation. He gave a midnight supper and banquet to a large and gay assembly, and exhausted himself by so doing. From that event, dates his dissolution; and he himself felt it: not now that he should soon die, but that he was actually dying. On leaving his sister one of those days, in bidding adieu to her and her lovely daughters, he said as he embraced the third, a budding beauty, "It is Death that embraces Spring!"

On Friday the 25th of March, the debate on the

Regency closed; and on Saturday evening, faithful to his habits, he went down to Argenteuil to commune with the unpolluted voices of Nature, and direct the laying out of his new residence. It was the last draught of our great mother, Mirabeau was destined to receive: the sun that sets so goldenly this Sabbath upon the meadows of Argenteuil shall rise again, fresh from his bathing in the inexhaustible light-fountain; the spring birds that, song-wearied, sink into slumber amid the sprouting copses, shall wake again to-morrow to pour out their songs anew; and the young flowerets that are peeping forth shall start out boldly, bloom and wither, and re-arise next year as of old: but never, ah! never shall *his* eye behold them, never shall his soul inhale their god-sent lesson: the world with all its verdure and freshness; its glad bird-songs and its tinkling brook-falls; and its proud thrones and base rascalities is dying away from him: the world recedes, and the eternities are dawning.

While at Argenteuil, on Sunday the 27th, he experienced a fearful and agonising attack of cholic, rendered doubly painful and dangerous from the absence of medical advice. In the face of all this, he determined to attend the Assembly on the Monday, to deliver a long and carefully-prepared oration on "Mines." This was an instigation of the purest friendship: the Count de Lamarck and his family had vested a very large portion of their money in the mines of Anzin, and it was to preserve this from

depreciation, that he had spoken on the subject a few days before (on the 21st). The Assembly had ordered his speech on that day to be printed: but still Mirabeau was not certain that his ideas would be incorporated in their decree; and so, on Monday the 28th, when almost dying, he proceeded to the Assembly.

On the way he was so much exhausted that he was obliged to call upon Lamarck, and lie for half an hour or so upon his sofa, in such a state of weakness and almost unconsciousness, that he could only gain sufficient strength to continue his route, by the aid of strong cordials. In this state he entered the Assembly, and five different times mounted the tribune, and spoke at considerable length each time: spoke till he had achieved his end and made his projects law; and then, having sung his last swan-melody, and bowed his "*moriturus vos saluto*," he staggered from the hall.

As he was walking down the terrace of the Feuillans, he was met by a young friend of his and of Cabanis, M. Lachèze; and Mirabeau accepted the support of his arm, describing at the same time the torture he was suffering from his immense labours that sitting. "You are killing yourself," said Lachèze. "Who could do less for justice and for friendship?" was the answer. When they descended from the terrace, a mighty concourse of people gathered round him: some cheering him, some preferring petitions, some asking questions, some gazing

silently and wonderingly upon him. The noise and hubbub distracted him, and he said, half fainting, "Take me hence; I have need of repose:" and the young man took him.*

They went away together, and Mirabeau having had a bath, felt so much invigorated as to go to the Italian Opera: but he had not been there many minutes ere he was forced to retire by another and aggravated attack, so severe and sudden as to render him well-nigh incapable of descending to his carriage; and when they found that it was not in waiting, he had to be supported by his friends till it was found, and then he was driven home to that house he was never to leave again alive.

"After inconceivable efforts," says Cabanis, "he arrived at last at home, in a most frightful state. I found him nearly suffocating, breathing with great difficulty, the face swollen from the stoppage of blood in the lungs, the pulse intermittent and convulsive, the extremities cold, and himself making vain efforts to repress the cries his agony drew from him. Never, at the first sight, had any invalid appeared to me so decidedly death-stricken. My emotion, which was extreme, and which it was impossible for me to disguise, made him perceive too well what I thought of his state. He said to me, "My friend, I feel very distinctly that it is impossible for me to live many hours in these painful

* Cabanis' *Journal*, &c., p. 256, whence most of this chapter taken. See also *Fils Adoptif*, viii. p. 413-457.

anxieties: hasten therefore; they cannot long continue."

And so, the Monarch of the Revolution has nothing left but to turn his face towards the wall, resigning himself to that which must be. And we ourselves, after narrating, all too-unworthily, memorable sayings, memorable actions, and memorable scenes, find that we have now nothing further to narrate concerning our living hero, than that most memorable scene of all; which, so scenic, so picture-like is it, we have learned to name—THE DEATH OF MIRABEAU.

And sublime and hero-like is that death: for if there could be any doubt concerning the magnanimity, the greatness of the healthful, active man, there can be none whatever of the dying one. In those last days of his, whatsoever was noblest in his nature stood out prominently without alloy, as floods forth with radiance an August sun, that, having battled with rain clouds and tempests all the day, shines out unclouded at its setting! We shall see that in those last and fearful hours, there dwelt no selfishness, no world-riot in his heart. The post-mortem examination will show how excruciating were his agonies; and yet, amid them all, his solicitude was not about himself, but solely about others: his thoughts dwelt not on individual prospects, on personal objects, but altogether, well nigh, on that fair France whose peace and whose prosperity were dying with him. Let us essay to paint the picture.

Early on Tuesday morning (the 29th) his illness began to be rumoured over Paris, and a few citizens, on presenting themselves at his door to make inquiries, learned the astounding tidings, that he was not merely ill, but was actually dying. One can imagine the reception of this unexpected information: not a sudden start and quick ejaculation, but a vague and semi-stupid stare, as though asking tacitly were it a dream or a reality; then a deep sigh, and a slow departure, to promulgate over the city that *Mirabeau is dying.*

Mirabeau dying! It cannot, may not be. But yesterday did we not see him? did we not hear him speak? and is he now leaving us for ever? leaving us, when more than ever his intellect, his oratory, his art of daring, are most wanting? when the Revolution wants consolidation, when our monarchy is in jeopardy, our infamous citizens rising into power, our lives and properties threatened with ruin, the man who alone could save us from universal alarm and carnage, ye say, is leaving us. It is too sudden to be probable; too dreadful to be credited: it may not, cannot, shall not be! Fearful and incredulous, greater numbers hasten thither; finding that the rumour was too true: that God's will is not man's, and that, even when they can least spare him, they must prepare to lose their Mirabeau.

Quick—as evil tidings ever do—flies over Paris the gloomy story, and calls up from every quarter each patriotic heart, until there floods upon the

Chaussée d'Antin, a countless inundation of anxious but silent multitudes. They extend down the street to the Boulevard, where a barrier is erected in order that no vehicle should disturb the sick man's quiet. To this concourse, several times in the day, a written bulletin is handed out, and then printed, and despatched over the length and breadth of Paris, that all men may know how fares the invalid. Twice a day with due etiquette, in full formality, does the king send openly, before all men's eyes, to ascertain the latest report; and several times beside come his private messengers: for King Louis feels that a fellow monarch is departing: feels that the last hope of his salvation hinges on that life. So intense was the feeling of the people, that Desmoulins thanked Heaven that the king did not go himself in person, adding, "that step would have made him idolized."*

Meanwhile, how is it with the sick man? The lamp of life flickers in and out inconstantly, giving at times hope to the spectators; unshared in by the sufferer, who knows his hours are numbered now. On the evening of Tuesday, he revived, and his sanguine physician deemed him out of danger; and when he told his hopeful opinion to his patient, received this unselfish answer: "*It is very sweet to owe our life unto a friend.*" And then, anxious lest Cabanis' housekeeper should be expecting him, Mirabeau insisted upon his returning home; and when Cabanis told him he should return to pass the night

* *Revolutions de Paris*, p. 640.

by his side, said, as he grasped his hand, "My friend, I have not courage to refuse you."

On Wednesday morning (the 30th) all was again at the worst, threatening almost instantaneous dissolution. He was so ill that he could see no visitors, and had to content himself with receiving through one of his immediate attendants a message of condolence and affection, brought by Barnave from the repentant Jacobins, at the head of a numerous deputation. Towards evening, however, he again grew easier; so much so that he was unattended during the hours of midnight: but when, at daybreak, Cabanis descended to his chamber, he found that he had been lying for two or three hours in the most violent pain; in which he continued to his decease. But, precisely in proportion as his bodily pangs grew more and more excruciating, his attention to his friends, and calm dignified resignation, increased. The friends who called to see him were not admitted, and even his adopted son was kept away from his chamber: his secretary de Comps, and Pellenc, and his chief friend of all, de Lamarck, were his constant attendants. His good sister, du Saillant, came frequently; and having to leave her carriage, by reason of the barrier, on the Boulevard, the dense crowd always parted reverentially, leaving an open passage for her to the door. The brother had cast a halo round the sister: as the moon reflects the sun, so she, from his splendour, was made luminous to the anxious people.

It was now painfully evident that life and death had come to hand and hand conflict, and Cabanis and all his friends entreated Mirabeau to be allowed to call in other medical advice: but he steadily refused to let any other see him; saying, "I do not forbid you doing or saying out of my chamber whatever you may please, but they must not enter here. And when Cabanis pressed him further, he said firmly, "No, I will see nobody: you have had all the trouble; if I return to life, you will have all the merit, and I wish you alone to have all the glory."

With Dr. Petit, who came but was refused admission to his chamber by Mirabeau, Cabanis held a consultation, and then, in the course of the day, administered many decisive remedies. These, however, had not the least effect; and seeing Cabanis disappointed and disconsolate, Mirabeau administered this sublime solace: "*Thou art a great physician; but the Author of the wind, that overthrows all things—of the water, that penetrates and fructifies all things—of the fire, that vivifies or decomposes all things,—He is a greater physician still than thou!*"

This was the last day in March, and well-nigh his last as well; and never was a month's exit crowned with a more august display of human self-forgetfulness and thoughtful generosity: it seemed as though whatever agony he suffered was not from his own internal torments, but from the uneasiness and sorrows of his friends. For the first time in his life he

beheld the Count de Lamarck weep like a very woman. "It is," he said thereon, "a very touching sight, that of a calm and frigid man not being able to conceal a trouble against which he vainly arms himself." He spoke with warm gratitude of Frochot's attentions to him, saying, if he grew well he should have learned the art of nursing an invalid from him alone; and when that gentleman supported his burning forehead, said, with a strange admixture of friendship, and the old self-confidence "Would I could leave it thee as an heritage!"

He was supplied regularly with an account of the debates, and entered into their intricacies. His mind was most absorbed with speculations on the English diplomacy. "That Pitt," he said, "is the minister of preparatives. He governs by what he menaces, rather than by what he actually does. If I *had* lived, I think I should have given him some trouble."

When they described to him the remarkable and unexampled solicitude of the people, he cried transportively, "Ah, yes! beyond a doubt, a people so feeling and so good is well worthy that one should devote oneself to their service: that one should endure all to establish and consolidate liberty! It was glorious to me to consecrate my entire life to their cause; and I feel that it is pleasing to me to die in the midst of them."

With Friday morning (April 1), came Dr. Petit, who was this time admitted to Mirabeau's chamber.

He found that death was actually then beginning, as the pulse had ceased to beat, and the arms and hands were cold and clammy as those of a corpse, although he still retained their use. After a very minute examination, Dr. Petit decided that there was not the remotest vestige of a hope. In the course of the morning came Talleyrand; who (and it is honourable to him) bent his proud resentment unsolicited, and came unexpected, but welcome, to pardon his dying friend, that they might not part as enemies. The Bishop of Autun opened the interview: an embarrassing task, considering the two years non-friendliness, in a very frank manner, "The half of Paris," said he, "remains permanently at your door. I have come hither, like the other half, three times a day to hear tidings of you, and regretting bitterly each time my not having the power to save you." The interview thereafter was tender in the extreme. It lasted two hours; during which Mirabeau embodied all his ideas upon the political aspect, in clear and forcible advice; at the same time giving him a speech he had prepared, "On the inequality of divisions, in succession by line direct," and begging him to read it for him at the ensuing debate: which Talleyrand did. After he had departed, Mirabeau made his visit a plausible pretext for declining the last offices of the Romish Church, informing the *curé* that he had already seen a higher ecclesiastic, the Bishop of Autun.

In the afternoon he made his will. Before com-

mencing, he said to Frochot. "I have some debts, and I do not know the exact amount: I know no more of the state of my fortune; nevertheless, I have several obligations imperious to my conscience, and dear to my heart." When these words were told Lamarck, he generously proposed to pay all legacies Mirabeau should recommend him; and with equal nobility of spirit, Mirabeau used this liberality, though moderately and with discretion.

Slowly declined the day, and the shadows of night crept over the land—the last night of his earthly pilgrimage: but if the shades of death were upon the body, the starlight of the intellect—the meteoric soul—gleamed out in undiminished brilliance. His physician lay on a neighbouring couch, and Mirabeau spoke with wondrous continuity till the morning; his words pouring forth too rapidly and too impetuously, in an unbroken fire-flood, as in the Assembly in his days of strength. Slowly also the curtains of night were in their turn drawn aside, and daylight began to dawn upon the world. His last day on earth! Think what lies in that! the past curling back like an indistinct and confused battle-picture, the present wavering like an empty vapour, and before, the dim immensity of the unknown To-Come looming up in hazy distance; unknown and dubious to the best of us Christians: but, alas! doubly so to the dying Mirabeau; for he properly had no belief whatever, and in the world to come he knew not the consoling sublimity of an universal tribunal and an everlasting re-

ward: but he looked forward unto death simply as a rest and an annihilation. And it is this that renders his death all the more heroic: for it is comparatively easy to die when death is regarded as the portal to a happier kingdom; but when an ignoble rest is the highest expectation, it is not so easy.

His first act on this last day was one of humane consideration. The wife of a faithful retainer, named Legrain, had scarcely ever left his chamber since his illness, although her son was ill of a fever, and she herself very far advanced in pregnancy; and scarcely had the day dawned ere Mirabeau addressed her thus—

"Henrietta, you are a good creature. You are about to have a child, and are risking the life of another, and yet you never quit me. You owe yourself to your family: go therefore, I desire it."

As soon as day had broken thoroughly, the windows were flung open, and the mild spring breeze stole in and fanned his feverish temples.

"My friend," he said to Cabanis, "I shall die to-day. When one is in that situation, there remains but one thing more to do; and that is to perfume me, to crown me with flowers, to environ me with music, so that I may enter sweetly into that slumber wherefrom there is no awaking."

His mention of flowers was one of the ruling passions asserting itself at the hour of death. In his little garden he had many trees and shrubs then greenly verdant, and here and there, in tuft or

border, the earlier flowers were bursting into bud, and the later ones peeping from the brown earth; and that his eye might behold them once again, they wheeled his bed to the opened window, and he looked forth into the expanse of heaven. Just then, as though to greet him, the round and lustrous sun emerged from behind the clouds, and rayed forth upon him; and as he basked in the beams, and gazed up, dazzled and delighted, to its broad circle, he cried—

"If that is not God, it is at the least his cousin-german!"

He then informed Cabanis that he felt he should not live many hours, and begged him to promise not to leave him till his death; and when in promising, Cabanis burst into tears, he said, "No weakness, unworthy yourself and me! This is a moment when we ought to know how to make the most of each other. Pledge me your word that you will not make me suffer useless pain. I wish to be able to enjoy, without drawbacks, the presence of all dear to me."

He then had de Lamarck brought to him, and having placed him on one side of him on his bed, and Cabanis on the other, for three-quarters of an hour he spoke to them of private and public affairs; "gliding rapidly over the former, but dwelling upon the latter:" in mentioning which he uttered his memorable words—

"*I carry in my heart the dirge of the monarchy, the ruins whereof will now be the prey of the factious.*"

Almost immediately after this he lost his power of speech, in which state he lay for an hour, apparently devoid of pain; but at about eight, the *coup-de-grace* of death was being given: his body convulsed and writhed as though in frightful and agonizing pain, and in dumb torture he signed for drink; water, wine, lemonade, jelly, were offered, but refusing them all, he signed again for paper; which being given, in hot rapidity he scrawled his wants and wishes in the words TO SLEEP! (*dormir*). Then, when that wish was not complied with, he wrote more at length, praying, for common humanity's sake, that they would give him opium. Just at that time, Dr. Petit arrived, and decided upon giving him a composing draught; and the prescription was immediately despatched to the nearest druggist. Meanwhile his aggravated death-pangs had burst the very chains of death, and he recovered speech, to give a reproach to his friend.

"The doctors, the doctors!" he cried.—"Were not you (to Cabanis) my doctor, and my friend? Have you not promised me that I should be spared the anguish of a death like this? Do you wish me to die regretting having given you my confidence?"

Having said which, he sank into a kind of asphyxia, and lay motionless, and to all appearance insensible; but cannon firing in the distance aroused him, and he said, in dreamy surprise—

"*Are those already the Achilles' funeral?*"

And immediately after, as the chimes rang half-past eight, he opened his eyes slowly, and gazing heavenward, died!

> So fails, so languishes, grows dim, and dies,
> All that this world is proud of. From their spheres
> The stars of human glory are cast down,
> Perish the greatness and the pride of kings! *

He was forty-two years and twenty-four days old; and as he lay there a corpse, the beholders remarked that—"Except one single trace of physical suffering, one perceives with emotion the most noble calm, and the sweetest smile upon that face, which seems enwrapped in a living sleep, and occupied with an agreeable dream."

So closes the most wonderful death-bed scene whereof we yet have annals: we called it wonderful; and not beautiful, and yet we would not have had it otherwise, for it is altogether in keeping with the man, and completes the character. A Christian's death had assuredly been more affecting, more beautiful, and less remarkable: but this stands out isolated; unlike any other, and must for many generations be esteemed as the beau-ideal of a materialist's death-bed—as the sublime of Deistic Faith!

* Wordsworth's Excursion.

CHAPTER XIV.

SENSATION CREATED BY HIS DEATH — POST-MORTEM EXAMINATION—WAS MIRABEAU POISONED? —FUNEREAL—EPISODIC.

THERE is no way so accurate for ascertaining the necessity and usefulness of a man, as to examine minutely the sensation created by his death; and if we measure Mirabeau by this standard, he must infallibly occupy the highest place in the temple of human excellence. His death was considered a loss by all parties: the king and court party mourned his decease, because he was the last bulwark to oppose unto the encroaching floods of republicanism; the moderate men mourned him, because they saw clearly what an unfinished and dangerous thing was the Revolution, and it was to him, and him alone, they looked for its completion; the ultras also lamented him, for they could not shake from their recollection that it was he, who, when none other dare do so, had defied absolute misrule, and stood up boldly for the unquestionable and reasonable rights

of his nation. We may say that the entire nation went into mourning for him; and it was not the formal etiquette mourning of conventional life, but the inner lamentation of the heart. His loss was deemed a personal and a public calamity, and one which nothing could mitigate or repair. One young man put into the hands of Cabanis this note, just before Mirabeau's death: "I have read in the public papers that transfusion of blood has been performed in England with success in severe illnesses. If to save M. de Mirabeau, the doctors think that plan useful, I offer some of my blood; and I offer it from the heart itself. The one and the other are pure." Greater proof cannot be given.

All theatres and places of public amusement were closed, and private réunions postponed; some from respect to the feelings of the people, but more from real sorrow for the death of the lamented one. On the Champs-Elysées there was a ball being held, however; and, it being deemed an insult to the national sorrow, the people burst in upon the revellers, dispersed the dancers, stripped the ladies of all their feathers and finery, and marched them all away with imprecations. Another, also in Paris, was served the same; and these were the only attempted scenes of festivity that were discovered in the whole of that immense city. There was one, too, at Argenteuil, in which the chaplain of the Carmelites figured so prominently, that he was seized, and would have been hanged had not the mayor rescued

him. So very jealous was the nation, that their lost king should be duly lamented.

To this universal grief there were, of course, some few exceptions. Mirabeau had been far too high a character, and too independent, not to have made many enemies; and it is, perhaps, the highest eulogium we can pass on Mirabeau, to state who these were who earned a disgraceful notoriety by vituperating him when the nation was adoring; by rejoicing when all were mourning:—these were *Robespierre* and *Marat.*

Camille Desmoulins, as usual, underwent that struggle between good and evil he experienced to his very latest minute: his heart incited him to weep for and to laud Mirabeau, and his faction; his principles (say, rather, his non-principles) led him to disparage and abuse. His *Revolutions de Paris,* therefore, for April 9, No. 91, is a strange admixture of libels, blame, denunciation, &c.; through which there is incessantly peeping forth the warm sympathies of the heart, and the admiring enthusiasm of the intellect. It is evident that Camille endeavoured to bring himself to hate Mirabeau and curse his memory, but found that he could not do it.

More decided was Marat: "People! return thanks unto the gods! Thy most redoubtable enemy has just fallen before the scythe of destiny: Riqueti is no more; he has fallen the victim of his numerous treasons: victim of the barbarous foresight of his atrocious accomplices, alarmed by having seen the

depositary of their frightful secrets to be wavering."*

Robespierre's opinion is arrived at by a short but striking sentence of his: when the news was brought to him of Mirabeau's death, and his last memorable speech about the "Achilles' funeral," Robespierre cried with much exultation, "*Achilles is dead! Then Troy shall not be taken.*" The acute-visioned terrorist knew well that the great obstacle to the spread of sans-culottism and alarm was now removed, and felt that there would thus be for him

"A way, out of his wreck, to rise in!"

But before the corpse of Mirabeau was consigned to its destination, was there not one most momentous question to be asked and answered? He had fallen suddenly: not like one that had wasted himself away, but more as one that had been unfairly dealt with; therefore there arose the question — *Was Mirabeau poisoned or not?* And a most difficult one truly to answer: one upon which it is almost impossible to reach a positive conclusion; the circumstantial evidence is so heavy on both sides of the argument. In this state of the case, history, with hardly any exception, has written down his death as natural; leaving, however, a little doubt upon it: but we think we shall be able to show that the correcter view would be, to state his death as caused by poison; also giving, however, a little room for dubiety.

* *Ami de Peuple*, No. ccccxix.

On the same day as his demise, the public accuser for the first *arrondissement* of the department of Paris, demanded that his body should be examined, in these words; clearly expressing the feeling of the public: "The violence of the illness, its rapid progress, the suddenness of the dissolution; perhaps also the exaggerated fears that the celebrity of M. Riqueti, the services which he has rendered to the public cause, and the strangeness of the circumstances, seem to justify, to a certain extent, the supposition that the death of M. Riqueti could not be natural. To verify that idea, or destroy suppositions perchance ill-founded, it is necessary to proceed to open and examine the body; and to give all the publicity and authenticity possible to that examination."*

In pursuance of that order, about noon on Sunday the 3rd of April, the body was opened in the presence of forty-four physicians and surgeons, as well as of some magistrates and other officials; and of a deputation of seven, sent by the crowds assembled in all the neighbouring streets. The result of this post-mortem examination is well known: it was that he had not been poisoned; and the state of the body, as published by Cabanis, was made to appear to corroborate that statement: for, as M. Vicq d'Azyr told the queen, the appearances of the body, as published, would argue as much that they had been

* *Procès-Verbaux de l'Ouverture et de l'Embaumement du Corps de Mirabeau l'aîné.* (In *Fils Adoptif*, vol. viii. 461.)

caused by violent remedies, as by poison.* And if the matter rested there, natural death would be the only tenable conclusion: but it does not, and there is quite sufficient existing evidence to show that the whole *procès-verbal* was a mere time-serving job.

"The stomach, the duodenum, a great part of the liver, the right kidney, the diaphragm, and the pericardium, presented traces of inflammation; or, rather, of active congestion. The pericardium contained a considerable quantity of a thick, yellowish, opaque matter. The whole of the external surface of the heart was covered with coagulated lymph, with the exception of its apex. The cavity of the chest contained a small quantity of water."†

So ran the published result of the examination; but that description is only negatively true: negatively we say, because while there is nothing but the truth inserted, the whole truth is studiously concealed. There were forty-four medical men at the autopsy, and several survived till within a few years; and these, having been carefully hunted up and questioned by the Fils Adoptif and other interested parties, the result is, that we discover that very many of the surgeons were confident that there were traces of poison; and also that, after long years' experience, they still entertained the same conviction. The doctors thus examined amount to ten, and it is but fair to argue that many more may have held the same views. How, then, came the verdict to be ren-

* Campan, vol. ii. 135. † Cabanis, p. 314.

dered, when thus dubious, as indubitably natural death? It was so rendered from expediency; there can be no doubt that the populace would have extorted a fearful revenge from somebody, had it been authoritatively stated that Mirabeau had been poisoned; and therefore the doctors judged it advisable to extinguish that idea. And now let us turn to a most suspicious circumstance.

M. Roudel and the Baron Barbier were two pupils of the Professor Sue; and the former of the twain, on examination of the stomach, found many erosions (holes eaten into it by mineral poison), and having pointed them out to the latter, they both exclaimed that he had been poisoned: but their master, Sue, immediately drew them aside, and silenced them with these words, "He was not poisoned—*he cannot be poisoned—understand that, imprudens! Would you have them devour the King, the Queen, the Assembly, and all of us?*" The inquiring students were thus put down: but Barbier, whether he disclosed his sentiments or not, being determined to satisfy at any rate himself, took up a portion of the stomach, and found it corroded and perforated evidently by a poisonous substance. He was about to demonstrate that fact, when he was suddenly called aside for a moment, and on returning, the affected part had vanished: neither could he recover it! So the question was burked. Barbier rose to be the surgeon-in-chief to the Val-de-Grâce, and was for many years one of the most celebrated practitioners in Paris, and still main-

tained the same opinion; and Sue himself assured the Fils Adoptif, that the words attributed to him were correct.

The post-mortem examination being thus unsatisfactory, it is necessary, to the obtaining of a decision, to discuss the circumstantial evidence of the likelihood of his being poisoned.

As we have intimated, this is strong on both sides; but far stronger on that of death by poison. In the first place, it was the clear and firm conviction of Mirabeau that he would be poisoned; as also of all his friends and his family. After his famous "*Silence aux trente voix*," on his way to outface the malice of the Jacobins, he called upon his sister, as our readers will remember, and said, in the course of conversation, that he had signed his death-warrant. He was frequently seized with acute pains, after dining or supping at strange houses; and on one of these occasions, when Madame du Saillant stated her fears that they were caused by attempts at poisoning, he replied—"You are right, I feel it: they hold me; they will have me." So firmly convinced was he of this, that for several weeks before his death he never partook of anything from home, save at his sister's or niece's houses. To Dumont he said at parting, "If I believed in slow poisons, I should not doubt that I was poisoned: I feel myself decaying; I feel myself consuming by a slow fire." What more probable than that these attacks were the results of attempted poisonings, which, mortal to

a weaker frame, were not so to the robust constitution of Mirabeau, and therefore served merely as a torture.

In addition to that, presents of wine, liqueurs, &c., were being perpetually sent him; which, while they *might* be the tribute of admiring friendship, were certainly suspicious offerings from totally unknown persons. In November 1790, once, when out together, Mirabeau passed a cup of coffee made for him to Pellenc, and insisted upon his retaining it; that gentleman experienced internal pains after drinking the same, which excited his suspicions greatly. And a similar thing occurred to M. Frochot, in December of the same year. The family were also incessantly being put upon their guard, and admonished against suffering Mirabeau to go to certain places, and partake of certain viands; and among the number of these informants was Cazalès. A letter was also received from an unknown woman, who, through the medium of her husband, had been enabled to expose to him the time and place of a projected assassination. The result of all this was, that whenever Mirabeau strolled out in his fields or gardens at Argenteuil, Madame du Saillant used to send her son, armed to the teeth, to follow at as close a distance as was possible without being perceived by his uncle.

Against this weight of evidence, what can be adduced in favour of the verdict of natural death? There is the fact that for a considerable period his constitution had been breaking up: and fevers and

ophthalmic blindness could not possibly be caused by poison. Moreover, his ceaseless round of sexual debaucheries, unabated to the very last, must sooner or later have exhausted his powers of life. And, lastly, there is the important question of, to whose interest was it that he should perish? If the nation was so grief-stricken at his decease, how could it be that that decease was by violence?

These latter arguments, however superficially conclusive, appear to us answerable. As regards his being worn out by licentiousness, we may hint, that a man so worn out does not die suddenly and abruptly, but rather decays; gliding first into a miserable imbecility, and then slowly into death. And as for the other, that has already been answered by several writers, who have ascribed his death alternately to the Jacobins and to the Emigrants. Without questioning those conclusions, we would suggest a third. It is known that there is a quality in the human soul called jealousy, which, pushed to extremes, becomes revenge in its keenest form; it is known, moreover, that that quality is the fiercest and most deadly in the soul of woman, when she is aroused by the infidelities and slights of a lover: is it not highly probable, then, that one of his mistresses—wooed, won, and cast aside—revenged herself by the means of poison? However, it is time we dismiss this question; and therefore, in so doing, we would express our opinion thus:—That Mirabeau, shaken and weakened by superhuman labours, both of the mind and body, was

fast hastening to his end, when that end was accelerated, and his actual dissolution caused, by means of poison.

But whether poisoned or not, Paris was determined he should not be interred without the most splendid death-tribute ever yet given to mortal man. The municipality imposed an eight-days' mourning; and the sections of Paris demanded that he should be interred in the centre of the Champ de Mars, under the "Fatherland's altar." On the evening of Sunday the Jacobins resolved, "that they would attend his funeral in a body; that they would wear mourning for eight days; that they would resume it every year on the 2nd of April; that his statue should be executed for them in marble."

On the Sunday also, the Duke de la Rochefoucauld presented himself at the bar of the Assembly, at the head of the department of Paris; and, after a few introductory words from him, M. Pastoret, procurator-general, read an eloquent address from that body, wherein they demanded that "The new church of St. Geneviève should be devoted to the sepulture of great men; that the Assembly should decide who were worthy of such sepulture of honour; and that Mirabeau should be first placed therein."

The Assembly was proceeding to discuss these points, when Barnave arose, and spoke thus:—

"We are not able at present to attend to the manner to be adopted for consecrating the nation's gratitude to those who have well served her. The

details, the minutiæ such a discussion would compel us to enter into, would interfere with and degrade the deep sentiments with which we all are penetrated. I move that a decree be passed in these terms:—The National Assembly declares that Honoré Riqueti de Mirabeau has merited all the honours which the nation shall decree to the great men who have served her truly. Refer the details to the committee of the constitution, with an order that they report their conclusion without delay."

This was carried, and on the 4th (Monday), Chapelier, in the name of the committee, proposed the following decrees, which were carried:—

1st. The new edifice of St. Geneviève shall be devoted to the reception of the ashes of great men, from the date of the epoch of French liberty.

2nd. The legislative body shall alone decide to whom that honour shall be decreed.

3rd. Honoré Riqueti Mirabeau is judged worthy of receiving that honour.

4th. The legislature shall not be able in future to decree that honour to one of its own deceased members: such an honour shall be left to the next following.

5th. The exceptions which shall be made for several great men, deceased before the revolution, shall only be made by the legislative body.

6th. The directory of the department of Paris shall be charged to put the edifice of St. Geneviève

promptly into a state suited to its new destination. Upon its front shall be engraven—

AUX GRANDS HOMMES, LA PATRIE RECONNAISSANTE.

7th. Until the new church of St. Geneviève be ready, the body of Riqueti Mirabeau shall be deposited by the side of the ashes of Descartes, in the vault of the old church of St. Geneviève.

After that, the president informed the Assembly that the funeral of Mirabeau would be ready to start by four in the afternoon; and when some member proposed a deputation thereto, he was met with an unanimous cry of—"We will all go—all of us." And so they separated.

All the afternoon were the places of business closed throughout Paris, and a silence, as of the City of Death, reigned unbroken; for those whom duty compelled to be busying abroad, walked lightly, and their very footsteps imparted dreariness to the already melancholy aspect. Towards four, however, immense masses of people began, still noiseless, to gather together; and the Boulevard, and streets contiguous to the Chaussée d'Antin, and in the line of march, were speedily crowded to the uttermost: then the windows were taken out, and soon filled with expectant thousands; after which, the very housetops grew peopled, until, wherever the eye turned, nought could be seen save human forms, and the heart grew weary with the monotony of life.

At half-past five the discharge of cannon, and the low sullen rumbling of the drums, announces the departure of the unprecedented procession. Let us observe as it defiles along the Boulevard slowly, and very, very sadly.

First, turning from the Chaussée d'Antin, we behold a detachment of cavalry, to open the march, and clear the way for the remainder. Then a deputation from each of the sixty battalions of the sappers and gunners, together with the brave bastillers. Marching by the outside of these, in single file, comes next a deputation of the most wounded of the disabled veterans. These are followed by a deputation from the sixty battalions of the National Guard, with their état-major, and headed by Lafayette, the commander-general; and with whom were the Swiss Guards, and some chaplains; and this portion was closed by the drummers and bands of the National Guard.

Then came the committee of the section, the secretary-registrar, the judge of the peace; and M. Cerutti, appointed to deliver the funeral oration. After these the *curé* of the parish of St. Eustache, with a large number of clergy, and the charity children. Then Mirabeau's battalion of the National Guard, headed by its temporary captain, and carrying its standard, immediately preceding—

THE BODY OF MIRABEAU.

The coffin, surmounted with an elegant civic

crown, and his military accoutrements was carried by twelve sergeants of the battalion, who insisted upon so doing; and surrounded on all sides by grenadiers and fusiliers with reversed arms. The corners of the pall were held by the four representatives of Aix. At the foot of the coffin came M. Lavillette, bearing the heart, which was garlanded with a crown of flowers.

Then came the mourners for the departed; at the head of whom were, of course, those of his immediate family. After whom, escorted by hussars, and by the veteran and juvenile battalions of the National Guard, came the president and the members of the National Assembly, walking purely promiscuously, and without distinction of party: courtite walking arm in arm with revolutionist; hater of Mirabeau's political principles and acts with their warmest admirer, all mingling together; all forgetting, in the sorrow of the heart and the admiration of the genius and daring of the illustrious dead, the petty squabbles and animosities of the times.

The Jacobins were next; adopting the same plan as the members of the Assembly. Then came the ministers of the king; the members of the department of Paris; the municipal officers of Paris, and from all the adjacent towns; the judges of the tribunals; the electors. A splendid hearse, rendered useless by the zeal of the sergeants, followed here, drawn by six black horses, superbly draperied; together with two mourning coaches with four

horses: a large quantity of private carriages, and a detachment of infantry and cavalry closed the mighty spectacle.

Amid the melancholy and half mystic dirge-melodies of the numerous bands; the incessant rumbling of the multitudinous drummers, and the sullen booming of the cannon discharged at stated intervals, the monster procession, extending over four miles of ground, amid the sobs and tears of five hundred thousand spectators, wended along slowly: slowly, indeed; for not until eight o'clock, when the shadows of evening were closing round, did they gain the church of St. Eustache, where the ceremonials were to be performed.

The National Assembly and Mirabeau's family were placed in the choir; and the nave and all other parts of the church were amply filled by the other members of the procession. The heart and body were placed upon an elevated platform covered by a daïs; and then the funeral service of the Roman church was performed in all its imposing pomp of sorrow; rendered trebly touching by the celebrated musician, Gossec, having composed music expressly for the occasion, so touching and tear-moving that few could listen and not weep. When that was concluded, a military salute was given, by discharging twenty thousand muskets;* several whereof being loaded with ball, and the reverberation being very powerful, the cornices were in many places shaken

* *Revolutions de Paris*, p. 649.

from the roof; wounding, fortunately, only one person. After that, Cerutti, mounted upon a platform near the altar, delivered a long and exceedingly wearisome eulogium upon Mirabeau: but as it was an eulogy of some sort, it met with loud applauses.

After this the procession re-formed itself and proceeded to the church of St. Geneviève, where, about midnight, the long and magnificent ceremony was completed, and the body of Mirabeau deposited side by side with that of the celebrated Descartes.

Funeral ceremony such as Mirabeau's has no precedent, and hitherto has had no imitations; and although in popular shows and pomp-displays we see no great intrinsic value, they are, nevertheless, valuable so far as they aid us in forming an estimate of the man on whom they are lavished: the man that can engross unto himself such a tremendous and altogether unexampled funeral as this of Mirabeau, must be a great man; for an *entire* nation, from its king to its meanest servant, never has bestowed, and never can bestow such homage on one unworthy of it.

With the actual interment, the homage was far from ceasing; it had to spread over France: for Mirabeau's celebrity, unlike any other of his cotemporaries, was not metropolitan. On the 4th of April, the department of Seine-et-Oise went into mourning for him; on the 7th, that of Seine-Inferieure; and on the 11th, those of Seine-et-Marne and Loiret. On the 3rd of May, his obsequies were re-celebrated in Corsica by the authorities; the

vessels there being ornamented with signs of mourning. On the 5th of April, the Chaussée d'Antin was changed into the Rue Mirabeau; and all over Paris, and all over France, poured forth such a tribute of bad literature and good, as a solitary man never before excited. We have essays upon him by Garat (afterwards minister), by Lenoir (his kind Vincennes' governor), and a dozen other names unknown; odes, orations, laments, life-sketches, &c. &c., by the score. A very incomplete collection of such publications, published in the month of May alone, numbers *forty-two*. Nay, so thoroughly Mirabeau-impregnated was the atmosphere of France, that for some two months the play-writers, in rapid fecundity, had to dramatize his life and even death. On the 15th of April, the king's Italian comedians played "Mirabeau in the Champs Elysées;" which, however, did not take well. On the 7th of May they produced the "Shade of Mirabeau," which was more successful. On the 24th, Monsieur's theatre brought out "Mirabeau on his Deathbed;" which was highly popular. And we are informed, that from these shoals there yet remain on the French stage some four or five dramas. Such a strange thing is an admiring people. But as an instance of how soon the dead are forgotten when the purse is concerned, in the following October, when M. Frochot announced in form Mirabeau's insolvency to the Assembly, demanding them to pay his creditors, they contented themselves with enthusiastically applauding

M. Frochot, and decreeing that "*Mirabeau's funeral expenses should be paid!*"

What became of Mirabeau's more illustrious friends after his demise is well known: the world is familiar with the lives of Talleyrand, Sièyes, Condorcet, and others; but of his less noted friends they will know less, and they deserve a few words. Cabanis resided in Paris undisturbed till 1808, when he died suddenly. Pellenc, after Mirabeau's death, came over to England, and formed an intimacy with Fox, Wilberforce, Brougham, &c., and then proceeding to Austria, rose to be a chancellor of State, and died in 1833. M. de Comps was proscribed, and after many adventurous dangers escaped abroad: he filled many diplomatic situations under Napoleon, and died about the time of his fall. Lamarck fled from France at the downfall of royalty, and soon after succeeded to the title of Prince of Arenberg: he died in extreme old age in 1833, cherishing his friend's memory to the last. Dumont survived till 1829, and the "Souvenirs" were not published till 1830: he had, in fact, not intended them for the press in that state; but, aware of their many inaccuracies, had postponed their publication till he had leisure to correct the whole. Madame de Nehra (to whom Mirabeau left 20,000 francs, charged on Lamarck) died in 1818; and Frochot expired suddenly, on hearing of his son's death, in 1829.

Mirabeau's uncle, the good old bailli, survived his renowned nephew three years; dying at Malta, on the 18th of April 1794, of a cancer in the toe, in his seventy-seventh year. The Viscount, Mirabeau's brother, did not so long survive him. After his indignant farewell to France, he raised a regiment among the emigrants; and the Prince of Condé sending him one day an imperative message, his hot Mirabeau-blood was excited, and he refused to admit the messenger; the officer, however, forced an entrance, and when the viscount rushed upon him to chastise him, received him on his sword point; and so ended his drillings for ever. He died at Fribourg, on the 15th of September 1792, aged thirty-eight, and weighing twelve score. It is generally supposed that the Mirabeau family is extinct; but it is not so: the viscount married in 1788 a very wealthy and noble lady, and had by her a son; who, marrying in his turn, had two sons, both of whom were living a few years ago. Madame du Saillant underwent her share of prison life in the Reign of Terror, but survived till very lately; and the Adopted Son enjoyed a government situation under the late dynasty: of which, let us hope, the present ochlocracy has not dispossessed him.

But while every friend and relative were thus journeying to their several destinations, the dead remains of Mirabeau were not suffered to rest undisturbed. When the celebrated iron chest was brought to light, several papers were found therein

relative to Mirabeau; and, though none were either in his handwriting, or in the king's—though they all tended to prove, not the receipt of monies, but rather the contrary—the Convention, urged on by the infamous Ruhl, veiled his bust, and *put his memory under arrest*, until the papers could be fully examined. In November 1793, they came to a definite conclusion, by decreeing that—

"The National Convention, after having heard the report of its committee of public inquiry, considering that there cannot be a great man without probity, decrees that the body of Honoré Gabriel Riqueti Mirabeau shall be withdrawn from the French Pantheon. . . . . The same day that the body of Mirabeau shall be withdrawn from the French Pantheon, *that of Marat shall be there transferred!*"

It was not, however, till the 21st of September 1794, that the decree was executed; and as Robespierre had then fallen, it is surprising that it should have been: but though the terror-king was no more, his principles were not all eradicated, and the reaction had not come; therefore the Jacobins demanded that the law should be executed, and it was so. In the dead of the night the appointed officers received the leaden coffin containing Mirabeau's ashes, and deposited them in the centre of the cemetery of St. Catherine, in the Faubourg of St. Marcel (the burying-place for criminals), without any outward sign to mark his resting-place.

Michelet thinks France ought to re-exhume him, and re-ensepulchre him in a becoming tomb. It may be done: for in the present state of France there is no folly that could be surprising—but Heaven forbid it! Where lies the perishing earth-portion of a man is not worth a thought—it is rottenness and corruption, be it here or there: but the soul, the estimation that is held in by mankind, is the thing to be set right and justified. So let the body sleep where it may; disturb it not: he has no need for Père-la-Chaise entombings—for Pantheon resting-places; for, nobler than them all, he is enshrined in the memories of mankind—his imperishable resting-place is in the page of history—and his mausoleum in the hearts of freemen!

CHAPTER XV.

CONCLUSIONAL.

Our work would be but incomplete, did we not endeavour to arrive at some definite and accurate conclusion regarding the wonderful man whose life we have been narrating.

The system of judging which commences by seeking out and contrasting whatever anomalies are to be found in Mirabeau's character, and exposing in strong juxtaposition the so-called contradictions; manifesting what singularities, what an agglomeration of darks and lights were in him: how he was, by turns, a demon and a saint; a virtuous orator, but a corrupt statesman; an elevated patriot, but a degraded private man;—that system that would thus judge, never has, never will, and never can, reach a satisfactory or correct conclusion. No man that can rise to the eminence he did—that can sway a nation by as legal and as warrantable means as he did—can ever be the preposterous medley of conflicting principles he is described as having been. In summing

up his character, we encounter the same perverseness as in detailing his hidden career: viz., that of adopting the tortuous, unlikely, and unnatural path, when the straightforward and probable way is open as the daylight. Are men of the constitutional temperament of Mirabeau such rarities, then, that we cannot comprehend him? Do we not, on the contrary, meet with them at every turn? Men, whose guide-lamp is intuition and passionate impulse —who act on the instant, more or less wisely, or more or less foolishly, as they have the faculty of insight—whom, therefore, taken piecemeal, you cannot defend, palliate, or esteem; but whom, taken altogether, you cannot, howsoever you may try, do other than love right cordially: because the same impulse that frequently plunges them into wrong, ere they are well aware, compels them as suddenly to noble and generous actions; done so heartily that they absorb the numerous little righteousnesses of a hundred purer and more frigidly virtuous men, as the rod of the rude Israelite swallowed up those of the polished and self-inflated Egyptians. First and foremost among such was Mirabeau: we call him the personification and beau-ideal of the impulsive in man: it was he who carried that principle into its farthest extremes, and therefore are all its beauties and defects visible and glaringly apparent in him. Look at him howsoever you will, in whatever shape —whether as politician, statesman, book-writer, orator, or lover—you have ever the same man, acting

precipitately and decisively from the powerful impulses of his fiery and impetuous heart. Hence it comes that Mirabeau can only be judged by men of like temperament—by his peers: the man who in his life has never experienced a fearful fire-bloodedness within him, combating his cooler judgment and his religious principles; the man who has drifted gently on, a calm conventionalist in all the opinions, ways, and habits he inherited from his parents; the man who, having too little native force, too little blood to go wrong, has consequently gone right—with whom it requires no terrible struggle, no fierce soul-conflict to go right;—that man, by his very nature, can have no sympathy with Mirabeau, can never understand his actions, and has no right nor title to sit in judgment on him.

We have said that Mirabeau was a man to be loved—and we repeat it: love and pity, coupled with warm admiration, are the only sentiments to be employed towards him. Let us glance back briefly over what we have narrated, and we shall see him in such a complication of trials and adversities and untoward situations, as would have effectually broken the spirit of any other than he: and shall we withhold our pity from a fellow-mortal under such a painful eclipse? We shall, moreover, see him courageously battling through it all; by dint of hard swimming, keeping his head, at any rate, above water: and shall we not love and admire a brother so bravely fighting?

We said in our preface, that "his errors were but half his; his brilliances, his goodnesses, were his own, entirely and alone;" and we now essay to prove it.

Of all natures, of all temperaments, that of the impulsive requires the most careful training, the most perfect education: to fire, we would liken it; which, if *taught*, if restrained within due bounds, will warm our hearths and work our factories, but, if untaught, if unrestrained, bursts forth in red conflagration, consuming and defacing many things. How, then, was Mirabeau—the fieriest of the fiery—how was he educated? We have seen it—we have read it. Cast by the hand of Providence upon, not only the most sceptical and immoral nation under heaven, but also in its most sceptical, most immoral, and most thoroughly rotten epoch—endued with a temperament naturally inclined to run into vagaries and crime with the same headlongness as into virtues; he, more than all men then living, required that his infancy should be duly nourished with the eternal God's edicts, his childhood instructed in the paths of virtue, and his youthhood fortified by kind admonitions of morality and of religion. And, instead thereof, he was utterly neglected: there was not one truly Christian principle engrafted in the child's expanding intellect; a little book learning, very little, was crammed into him, and all the rest was disgraceful and scandalous neglect. Soon as the child's eyes were opened, and looked inquiringly forth to supply

itself with example-precepts, since others had not been vouchsafed him, he found a father hating him without cause, and living in open and unconcealed adultery; he found his two parents squabbling and quarrelling in incessant rancorous dispute; he saw around him no monitor, no guide, but only false lights—*ignes fatui*—deluding unto death; he beheld a church, hollow and trumpery at its best, but then so hollow and so artificial that a child like him could see its paltriness, its non-vitality: and so when thus unarmed by principles, he was, at eighteen, launched upon the world, he not unnaturally fell. An intrigue, an amour: a crime committed by thousands of young men, was treated as an unpardonable offence, and punished, not by a parental lecture, but by a prison, and a talk of death by a poisonous climate. And so on, from prison to forced battlings in Corsica, to half forced marriage and no allowances, thence to fresh captivity in If and Joux; then base wife-desertion and a fresh fall; then living by the pen in Holland, and then, finally, three years' sojournment in a foul and loathsome dungeon in Vincennes; and then, at the age of thirty-two, his education was completed.

In the name of common justice (to say nothing of charity), what can you expect from such a training-up in no way whatsoever? Do goodness, virtue, piety, spring up indigenous in the human heart, or have they to be planted? If the world's appointed sower (the parent) sow the fair seed-field with nothing: or if with anything, with tares; how can the

world expect an unmixed corn-crop? If the world get nothing in such a case, it is as much as it has a right to expect: if the world get a mingled crop of tares and wheat, should it not rejoice greatly in having so reaped where it did not sow, and not anathematize the field because it produced no more? Mirabeau, rising from such a wilderness of woe into the mighty man who out-thundered his everlasting word-magic from the tribune of the French Assembly, is one of the wonders of the world. The natural result of his education would have been an immoral and bad man without mitigation: many men have been immoral and bad with less excuse for their immorality and badness, and been less decried than he. How unjust, therefore, seems that decrying, when he became a man in whom badness was the exception, not the preponderance; when he became, in fact, the greatest of his nation; or rather (since the word *great* implies, as we take it, some qualities Mirabeau lacked or, possessing, misapplied), let us call him the most *gigantic* man, not only of his own nation, but of all the world.

Gigantic is the true term: he was indeed gigantic: something like those old mythological giants who hurled mountains at the gods. His distinguishing feature is, that on whatever he laboured was imprinted one broad, unmistakeable stamp of masculinity.

In whatever character we consider him, we shall discover the same peculiarities. As a man of letters, his acquirements were so extended and so varied, that

history, unable to comprehend them, through ignorance of his habits of industry and facility of learning, has adopted the readiest way of *accounting* for such multifarious knowledge by questioning it entirely. But if he was only superficially acquainted with all he professed to know, how comes it that in all his public documents and private letters, whenever a quotation could give weight to his illustration or argument, he has one ready from any language, always to the point; and not usually from the noted passages of the more celebrated authors, but from the obscurest and least known? It is an indubitable fact, that Mirabeau was a perfect master of the Latin, Greek, French, Italian, Spanish, and Dutch languages, and their literatures; that he was well grounded in the English, especially in its literature, and that he knew somewhat of the German.*

As a statesman, the same giant-like manliness is visible also. He never appeared in the light of a mere parliamentary quibbler, and cunning tergiversationist: such as our great statesmen have, for the most part, been. His measures were in no case the measures of deceitful fox-like juggling, but they were couched in plain and not evadeable language; containing no vague principles, but firm and distinct in their every feature. His measures were not always sound: they could not be, considering their number:

* We have been considerably gratified to find these acquirements fully done justice to by the Hon. Mr. Smyth, in his "Historic Fancies."

but they were either good or bad, and never indifferent; and whether good or bad, they had a breadth and magnitude peculiarly his own.

As an orator, his immensity is the most remarkable. His voice, his action, his words, were all of the same leviathanic mould: in no other orator can be found that pomp-rhetoric, that almost oppressive comprehensiveness, which, embracing the widest limits, omits not the minutest detail—that body, that volume of fluent eloquence, and that decided rounding of his paragraphs, ending as though the whole soul of the speaker had been infused with a dash into the last sentence. Madame de Staël's inimitable expression can alone describe his oratory, when she says it contained "*a power of life.*"

As a private man, it was the same: no one could have a personal interview with him, and not be entirely captivated with his broad, open frankness: as of a giant, who feeling he was such, and knowing his power of plain force, disdained concealing it in hollow formalities and deceits. None could resist him: his governors melted before him, his uncle also: despite his ugliness, no woman's heart was proof against him. At Dijon, a tradesman to whom he owed money said, "He owes me much, but whatever I have is at his service;" at Provence, the peasants lighted bonfires at his return; in Paris, Romilly and Dumont were literally carried away by him; de Comps when he died, attempted suicide from grief; the stern, aristocrat Lamarck, for the first

time in his man's days, wept when Mirabeau was dying; and Desmoulins could not refrain from crying in a transport of feeling, "O, how I loved him!" The son of the woman whom Mirabeau sent from his deathbed, out of consideration for her attention and her situation, forty years after, for long hours copied manuscripts for the Adopted Son, that he might in some little repay the benefits showered by Mirabeau on his father and his mother. And when Mirabeau came face to face with the queen, she, the proud imperious lady, was forced also to melt, and say she was, "*delighted* with him."

But in this our canonization-trial, to let the detraction-side have fair play, all the great censures passed upon him shall be inserted and commented on.

He was immoral. It is most true: he was as gigantic in that as in anything else, and was perhaps the most inordinately and wholesalely incontinent of all his contemporaries; and the pen would be at once dangerous and disgraceful that for one moment would defend that incontinence. But, though admitting of no defence, there is room for palliation and excuse. He was victim to a physical disease, known to the faculty, whereby a man is prompted to sensual gratification to such an extent, that strong moral resolution is required to repress that prompting. Also, the state of morals was low in France; most low: amours and adulteries were taken as matters of course; and there is not the same sin in going through a common gap, though it be trespass,

as in breaking the fence down, and being isolated in so trespassing.

To this latter excuse will, of course, be opposed the fact, that, great as was the license of the age and nation, Mirabeau so far outstripped that license as to be scouted by good society; until his triumph as an orator outblazoned his shame as a private man. To this we reply, by exposing the cause of that scouting. It was not that he was immoral, but that he was immoral not according to the received order of immorality. His character was ruined by his affair with Sophie: but it is curious to see why. It seems that adultery in those days had its established etiquette, and it was for infringing this that the society of France discarded him: it was because he *ran away* with her. His was the first instance of such violence ever recorded in the history of French intrigue; and it was that, and that alone, which caused his disgrace. They did not quarrel with his adultery, but merely with the way he did it: had he merely had an ordinary liaison with Sophie (that is, been the mean villain to visit the Marquis of Mounier daily, and partake his viands and his kindness, while he was working him shame), all would have been a matter of course. Nay, we that so severely censure him now, have we not the bust of Byron in our lobbies—Don Juan on our book-shelves? Wear we not oak on Royal-Oak Day, in remembrance of the austerely continent Charles II.'s salvation? And haply the portrait of his most gracious majesty King

George IV. is hanging on our walls! But beyond that, he was disinherited and had no money; and we know that certain sins are regarded with a punctilious acrimony when perpetrated by an adventurer living on his wits, which are most conveniently winked at when committed by a man with cash.

He was venal. This charge requires no excuse, but only a plain denial. Was it venality which prompted him to refuse his freedom and the payment of his expenses, provided he would leave Madame de Mounier to her fate? Was it venality which led him, when in imminent danger of starvation, to spurn Montmorin's offers of employment, because he would have no connection with a government delaying the convocation of the States? And his connection with the court; was that venal? It must first be proven that he received any money at all from the court, which cannot be done: but, ceding that position, his venality or corruption is not proved. Venality, being defined, means a man uttering sentiments at variance with his own convictions, in consideration of certain sums of money paid him for so doing; and so far from Mirabeau having done so, we cannot find any sentiment propounded by him, either privately to the court, or publicly after his alliance with the king, which he did not express before the commencement of the Revolution, and advocate during the whole of his legislative career. The means he advised the king to save himself by, were not counter-revolutionary, but con-

stitutional; and many times after his connection with the court, he gave the Royalists some of his severest lashes. *He ought then to have saved royalty for nothing, to show that he was not influenced by mercenary motives.* Thus, for a purely egotistic motive, a feverish anxiety for his fame, he was to have committed a palpable wrong. The case stands thus: Mirabeau had numerous creditors, men to whom he owed just and honourable debts; was it not his duty, if he could, by any honest means, obtain money for them, to do so? When he had poor and hungry creditors waiting anxiously for the settlement of their equitable demands, ought he, with (to him) cheap self-denial, to have chivalrously declined to receive his salary, fairly and well earned by him, as private minister to the crown? We conceive, if there yet linger any doubt, concerning his uprightness, this fact will prove it: that he never personally received any money from the court (that there is moral proof for, we mean: there is no direct evidence for any); but that what was paid him was done so indirectly, being a sum devoted to liquidating of a portion of his debts!

He was ambitious. That is undeniable: but then, is ambition a weakness, or a crime? Does that quality which in a private capacity is praised, become blameable when manifested in a public function? The clerk, by diligent attention and steady application, endeavours to force his way into the same station as his master, and we call it praise-

worthy thrift; the statesman endeavours, by like methods, to rise higher in the legislative scale, and it is—restless ambition! Ambition is only culpable when inordinate and misapplied: when a man struggles to become that which he has no qualification for being. And it can never be shown that Mirabeau aspired to any office or function for which he had not every requisite—to which he had not the clearest and most indisputable claim.

But above all these discussions, arises one overwhelming question; viz.—Do we expect a great man to be *perfect?* We do not: and yet in summing up the characters of such men as Mirabeau, we always go upon that principle. The vocabularies of all the churches insist incessantly and positively upon the imperfectibility of our nature; and in estimating ourselves and humanity in the aggregate, we use a low and defective standard, allowing numerous weaknesses, foibles, and faults to be the necessary concomitants of our nature; but no sooner do we judge an individual fellow-man, than we fling aside our measure of humanity, and gauge him by the standard of the gods. Such a system is most unjust. Had Mirabeau possessed his miraculous genius without any alloy of loose principles and immorality, he had been no man, but a deity. Thankful, therefore, while we pity and reprobate, should we be for those errors; for, had it not been for them, we could not, in parting, have entwined our arms in spirit round him, and looking delightedly on his rugged features,

have cried, as we do now, in warm affectionate pride, "My dear, illustrious *brother!*"

But thankful in another sense should we be for these errors of Mirabeau: they may serve as warning lights unto us, so that we may avoid the rocks he struck upon. Those errors, if we accurately trace them out, will yield, at once, a valuable political and moral lesson.

First, then, the political lesson. It is the all-important, and never (especially in these times) too-often repeated one; that, under no consideration whatever, can a radical and sweeping reform be otherwise than deleterious. Mirabeau adopted and practised that system, in a manner better than which it never can be practised; he carried it out also to the full, and it signally failed: failed not only in actual effect, but also by its noble advocate discovering its dangerous character, and repenting with sad heart's sorrow that he had ever practised it. Let all radical reformers study this one fact, indubitably true; *that by the French nation, under Mirabeau's leadership, reforming their monarchy radically and sweepingly, instead of cautiously emending it, the English national debt is some eight hundred millions!*

Another political lesson is, that never is it otherwise than dangerous and reprehensible, not alone to create an improper auxiliary, but even to use it: Mirabeau did not excite the people to their force-demonstrations, neither did he approve thereof; but, to effect what he considered good and useful reforms,

he employed them negatively, and entrenched himself upon them; finding, when too late, that the same brutal force which aided him in good measures was even more ready to aid others in bad ones. Whence we learn, that *to arouse and employ, for however praiseworthy an object, an unconstitutional and intimidating power is most noxious to the wellbeing of any nation.*

Lastly: the moral lesson. That, however rightly intentioned and naturally good the heart may be, its stability cannot be depended upon, unless some life-principle be taken up early in life, and steadily followed. This is most manifest in Mirabeau: that his disposition was generous and right, that his heart was kind and good, we cannot doubt; but, owing to the absence of those good qualities being duly trained into a proper channel, they were greatly nullified; and it was purely from the reason that we find in him no settled, definite fixedness of purpose, no unwaveringly devoted attachment to the Upper Powers, that we were constrained to withhold from him the glorious epithet of GREAT; contenting ourselves with bestowing the bastard one of GIGANTIC. Had Mirabeau been religious, one sees not what dignified pinnacle in the Fame-temple he had not occupied: whether Shakspere, or Luther, or Homer had not paled before him?

Mirabeau has his excuse for not having been devotional—a believer; we have already given it: it is because the love of heaven and the heavenly was never grafted in his mind; but we, born in another

nation, in a less corrupt time, and of tender and right-minded parents—we have not that excuse. Morning and evening, over town and hamlet booms forth the touching music of the bells: the bells that rang our forefathers' wedding peals and funeral dirges chime there still; if not to summon us to the house they sound from, at least to tell us there is a God above us. Cold is the heart that melts not at their music; dull is the spirit that draws no lesson from their chimes. What say they, as methinks I hear them, sweet-pealing from the old grey tower, around whose base the mouldering dead lie sleeping?

"Sons of man!" runs the melody, "toil on, toil on! even so, by an inscrutable decree, is your destination here: they tell you you should not toil; they tell you you should all battle and fight for what you have not, for what God has seen fit you should not have, and they prate for ever of your *rights!* Heed them not, they are false prophets; and your rights are baseless chimeras, not to be battled for: since this earth is not a place of right, of equality, of justice, but simply a place of sojournment, of probation; where no man has his deserts entirely, nor ever shall. It is a place of trial; and whoso endures that trial, be it of poverty, or be it of wealth (and both *are* trials), the most uncomplainingly, the most patiently, the most valiantly, that man is the saint of saints. In this advanced century have we yet need to tell, as with a tongue of iron, that earth is but earth; that the heaven is hereafter? The one unva-

riable law still remains, and must remain until the end of time: it is, that earth is no luxury-couch, but a fearful battle-field. Fight on then, O, ye heaven-conscripts! fight on: the present is confusion, and wounds, and toiling amid sorrow, and sweat, and blood; the glory, the reward, the eternal diadem—those are the great TO-COME!"

My brothers! this is not our home;
Here Wrong's wild waves about us roar:
Rude breakers, hissing round us, foam,
And angry billows flood the shore:—
But fear not, faint not; from on high
GOD'S glory cleaves the frowning sky;
And Rest, though loud the tempests rave,
Beams, grandly bright, beyond the grave.

THE END.

London: Printed by STEWART and MURRAY, Old Bailey.

00141790

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 15 June, 2016